

DIVA



ALICYA EYO

"My mum told me
to come out"

FIRST LADIES

MEET THE MOST
POWERFUL
LEZ/BI WOMEN
IN THE WORLD

TRANSPARENT'S

Cherry Jones
and those sexy
hot-tub scenes

MARGARET CHO

"COMEDY SAVED
MY LIFE"

"WE DON'T EXIST
TO SELL SEXY"

BI COMMODIFICATION
IN A STRAIGHT WORLD

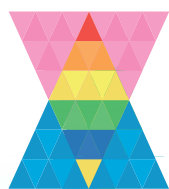
Ellen Page

"I wish I'd come out sooner"

SARAH OUTEN

Britain's most adventurous lesbian
comes home (to get married)

HOW TO GET YOUR
WORK & LIFE
BALANCED



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LESBIAN
FESTIVAL

28 MAY
06 JUNE 2016
MALLORCA
SPAIN



28.05 

29.05 ELLA TALKS

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BUSINESS, TOURISM AND CULTURE.

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DISCOVERING DELICIOUS SPECIALTIES AND
CULINARY TRADITIONS OF THE ISLAND.

02-05.06 **ELLA BEACH & PARTY**
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PARTY IN THE NIGHT!

06.06 

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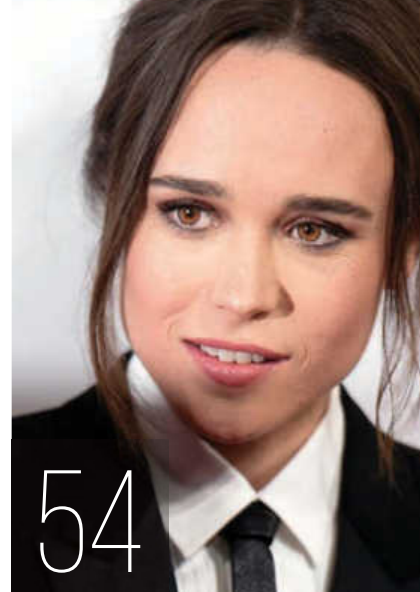
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CONTENTS



■ On the cover

18 **DIATRIBE**
Equal marriage referendum for Northern Ireland? Why it's a No

24 **WHY WE LOVE...**
Uganda's Kasha Nabagasera, indomitable LGBT activist

30 **VOICES OF THE FUTURE**
How last year's flurry of out pop stars have set the tone for 2016

38 **CARRIE-ANNE MOSS**
You know her as Trinity, now meet her new gay character

40 **CHERRY JONES**
The lesbian actress on her role as a "dude dyke" in Transparent

42 **MARGARET CHO**
"Cathartic rage healed me; I want all of us who survived to heal"

44 **PORTFOLIO**
Looking back at the work of the late Jo Spence

46 **BIG JOANIE**
Black feminist punk band Big Joanie say it loud

48 **THESE WOMEN RULE**
Out women are making their voices heard around the world

54 **ELLEN PAGE**
The Hollywood star on how her role in Freeheld helped her come out

60 **SO SEXY IT HURTS**
How that "hypersexual" myth harms bi women

62 **FAT POWER**
Lesbians invented the fat activist movement, says Charlotte Cooper

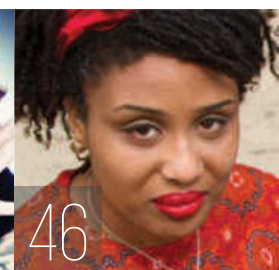
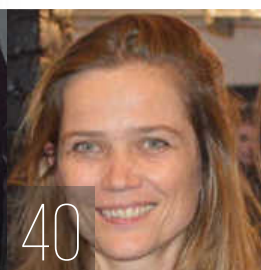
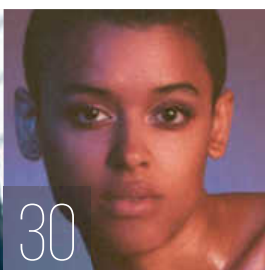
66 **FIND YOUR BALANCE**
Four simple steps towards making your life work for you

68 **FIGHTING A GOOD FIGHT**
Conflict is part of life, so how can we make sure we fight fair?

71 **GET PROTECTED**
Make sure you're protected when you're connected

72 **SOBER START**
A new campaign supports LGBT people to go alcohol-free in January

74 **SARAH OUTEN**
She rowed, biked and kayaked around the world in an epic adventure





ON THE COVER

Photography
Victoria Will

REVIEWS

32-37 **REVIEWS**
Books, film, music,
online and TV



Throughout the issue you will see this symbol, which indicates that there is digital content available related to that particular feature. You will be able to access this complementary content when you purchase our digital edition from divadigital.co.uk or directly through the DIVA branded app, available on the App Store, Google Play, Kindle Newsstand and Windows Store. (Please note that additional content may not be available via all of our third-part digital suppliers. However, buying the issue using one of the methods above will give you access to this content.)

HUMOUR & COMMENT

16-22 **COLUMNISTS**
DIVA regulars Jay Bernard,
Charlotte Cooper and
Susan Calman

27 **COMIC**
Queen Josephine brings on
the Queens of the Scene

28-29 **PICK 'N' MIX**
Stuff that's caught DIVA's eye
plus Mediawatch

MAGAZINE

10 **EDITOR'S LETTER**
Plus, how to
get in touch

12 **YOUR SHOUT**
You tell us what you
think of DIVA

14 **SUBSCRIBE**
Get DIVA delivered to your
door before it hits the
shops and save money!

82 **DIRECTORY**
Genuine lesbian-friendly
businesses

92 **DIAL A DIVA**
Looking for love?
Why not check out
our personals?

98 **NEXT ISSUE**
Coming soon...

LIFESTYLE

76 **SCENE: LONDON**
The bois are back in town at
Butch Please! and Man Up!

78 **TRAVEL**
Find your perfect match in
Lisdoonvarna, Ireland

80 **CITY GUIDE: VENICE**
The world's most romantic city
offers some gay-friendly treats

81 **FIRST CLASS**
Travel tips to help you
plan your holidays

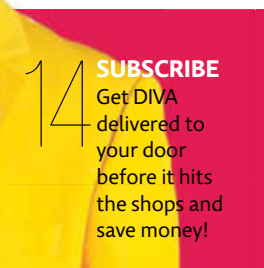
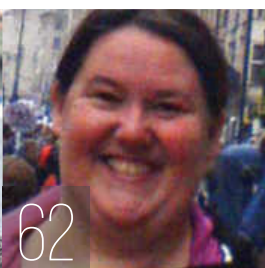
88 **SEX/LIFE**
Twelve really good reasons
to play with yourself

90 **MOTORING**
Touch it, ride it, get inside it –
luxury cars come to Westfield

93 **NO PROBLEM!**
Feeling troubled? Let DIVA ed
Jane salve your sorrows

95 **TECHNOLOGY**
Rhoda Meek takes a peek
into the future of tech

96 **DIARY**
More lez/bi listings than
you can shake a stick at



EDITOR'S LETTER



As we go to press, we learned that **openly gay Guatemalan politician Sandra Morán** has been voted into congress. Congresswoman Morán set up the country's first lesbian collective 20 years ago and helped organise Guatemala's first ever Gay Pride event in 1998. Morán joins an all too small and elite group of **lesbian, bi and trans women worldwide who have been elected to govern in their respective countries** (p48). We hope that the women profiled in our feature inspire you to take charge and make change in the coming year. Looking ahead to 2016,

our new music editor **Charlotte Richardson Andrews** selects the acts to watch (p30) while **Susan Calman** (p22) tells how she plans to celebrate the New Year. We're thrilled to have **Ellen Page** (p54) as our cover star, talking about how her life, and Hollywood, have changed since she came out, and her **forthcoming film, Freeheld**. We've got tons more interviews with inspiring women too: from comedian **Margaret Cho** (p42), adventurer **Sarah Outen** (p74) and Transparent actress **Cherry Jones** (p40) to **Carrie-Anne Moss** (The Matrix), who stars in TV drama **Jessica Jones** (p38), and **black feminist punk band Big Joanie** (p46). Finally, this month we have two great offers on our print edition – get 3 issues for £7.99 or, even better, 6 issues for just £14.99. That's 37% off the cover price. And an offer you won't find anywhere else. More details on p14.

Jane Czyzelska
DIVAMAG.CO.UK

NEXT MONTH



FEBRUARY ISSUE on sale 28 January

Skin: the out bi rock star from Skunk Anansie on her new album and more
Kate Bornstein: the genderqueer trans woman, author and performer on her UK tour
Jack Monroe: our new columnist writes about parenting while non-binary
The memory gap: how historical fiction helps us claim our hidden lez/bi history
Rosie Wilby: why do we stay close to our exes?
Travel special: discover the top 10 destinations for LGBT travellers in 2016
How social media is changing the way we travel
Fatal attraction or tried and true? Why are we drawn to the ones we love?

CONTACT US!



GOT AN IDEA FOR AN ARTICLE?
Email edit@divamag.co.uk and tell us all about it



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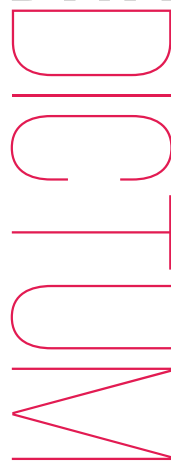
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DIVA



Best way to start the New Year?

Editor Jane Czyzelska

"Sober"

Deputy editor Louise Carolin

"With a good walk on a bright, sunny day"

Editorial assistant Carrie Lyell

"The Loony Dook"

Designer Fernando Safont

"No matter how you do it, it's going to take its revenge and make you older"

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Books editor Eden Carter Wood

Film editor Lucy Peters

Diary editor Dora Mortimer

Art editor Anna McNay

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Sales/distribution 020 7424 7400, fax 020 7424 7401

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THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF DIVA IS ON SALE FROM 28 JANUARY 2015

Postal address DIVA, Millivres Prowler Group, Spectrum House, Unit M, 32-34 Gordon House Road, London NW5 1LP

Email edit@divamag.co.uk

Website divamag.co.uk

Newstrade distribution Conde Nast and National Magazine Distributors Limited, Unit 3, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE

UK enquiries email karen.donohoe@comag.co.uk

Printed in UK by Wyndeham Group

PUBLISHED BY MILLIVRES PROWLER LTD

Chief executive Simon Topham

Strategy director James Frost

Media & marketing director Kim Watson

Commercial director Ben Gardner

Operations director Robert Hanwell

Financial director Anthony Martin



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Star Letter

K-STEW'S AN INSPIRATION

I loved the December issue of DIVA, especially the interview with Kristen Stewart. It was nice to get to read about her artistic concerns as an actor, rather than her relationship status. She is an inspiration, and proves you can get where you want to in life by doing things your own way. I also really enjoyed the radical bookshops article – it was a definite reminder to revisit Gay's The Word before Christmas!

Hetty Mosforth

WIN!



STAR LETTER PRIZE

Congratulations to the writer of this month's star letter who has won this fantastic August DAB radio. This sleek gadget features a Bluetooth speaker so you can play tracks straight from your phone or tablet, as well as USB and SD card reading capabilities. This little beauty will also wake you up in the morning so you'll always greet the day with a smile on your face. Winning never sounded so good! tinyurl.com/DIVAStarLetter



WRITE TO US

letters@divamag.co.uk

or use the old-fashioned method and drop us a line at

DIVA MAGAZINE

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London NW5 1LP
United Kingdom

FAREWELL, RUBBISH!

Couldn't find any other place to say how awful it is that Sarah Westwood (The Rubbish Lesbian) isn't going to write her articles in DIVA any more. I would like to tell her how sorry myself and my wife are going to be to lose her

extremely witty and enjoyable articles each month!

All the best for your future, Sarah, and thanks for entertaining us with your wit and humour!

Kay & Hazel



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"DO YOU HAVE A FEMININE MAGAZINE," bellows an elderly lady in the shop, "CALLED DIVA?" A pause. "IT'S LESBIAN I THINK. IT'S FOR MY MATE!"

@RONI_MARIE1975

Normally get digital magazine, but had to get a hard copy of this one ;) just cause of K-Stew one for later ;)

@emilyruthclark

so sad that the subscription my partner got me for Christmas last yr has ended! Need to renew!

@MissPiercing22

Sitting reading @DIVAmagazine with a cuppa, what better way to start a long weekend ?

@_choobacca

Can't recommend @thebeefers' @DIVAmagazine column enough. Always on-point, always a thrill, always honest in the face of heavy, messy topics

@graveyardwitch

thanks for your article on femmes who like femmes and your continued support of bi women. Wonderful!

@TeacherBates

Wow! Thnks @DIVAmagazine @gohocchick Chocchick prize just arrived-in

time 4 our anniversary. It's massive! Wkd sorted :)

@Saintless

Trying to get more involved in the LGBT community and starting by reading @DivaMagazine

@LizRa

Just what you need after a long day @divamagazine lovely my girlfriend rules!

@tashabeck

Sat with my mum watching Austin Powers while reading @DIVAmagazine ... Well, this is new.

@ztsamudzi

YAAAAS to @Rai_Kabir's brown femme magic being recognized and celebrated by @DIVAmagazine

@shawyjuniior

@DIVAmagazine collection is getting boxed up ready for the move to our new home.

@RunAmok9

Got a new plaid shirt, freshly buzzed hair, reading @DIVAmagazine, contemplating hummus & playing neko atsume... what a massive stereotype.

@MurrayLover1

Got to love @DIVAmagazine Alex Vause and Shane t shirts as idea's for Christmas presents, pretty cool.



Another look at Kristen Stewart,
last month's inspiring cover star

COMPETITION

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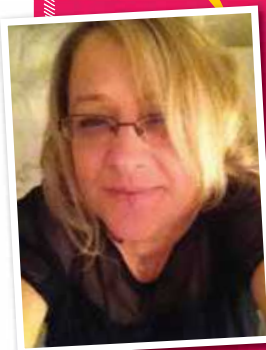
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Pleased to
meet you!



Every issue, we invite one of our readers to tell us about her relationship with DIVA.



NAME & AGE:

NATALIE CATTELL, 44

FROM:

CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

OCCUPATION:

SOCIAL SERVICES

IDENTITY:

LESBIAN

WHAT MADE YOU START READING DIVA?

An ex had a copy on the lounge table so I read it and was hooked – I didn't know it existed!

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A READER ?

On and off for six years.

PRINT OR DIGITAL ?

I love going in the shop and seeing the shop assistant's face when I buy it.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT DIVA?

The celebrities, the reader letters, the advice and mainly identifying with the articles about relationships and how mine aren't that strange at all!

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF ?

Stories of how people met and photo shoots of lesbian models.

WHO ELSE READS YOUR COPY?

No one but I might start taking it into work – maybe it will help answer the questions I keep getting about lesbian sex!

WANT TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

Send a photo and your answers to the questions above to letters@divamag.co.uk

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR COPY AFTER YOU HAVE READ IT ?

I keep it on display until the next issue comes out (pardon the pun).

WHO WOULD YOU PUT ON THE COVER AND WHY ?

Ruby Rose, as the girls at work all fancy her so they will definitely want to read it :)

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I want a dyke for prime minister



When I heard that Winston McKenzie – the former boxer who ran a shady pub in Thornton Heath, near where I grew

up, and self-proclaimed “black voice for Great Britain” – was leaving UKIP on account of racism, I waited for quite a long time to be struck by the irony. It didn’t happen. Somehow the irony gave way to a grim set of anticipations, like when you watch the mentally ill being goaded on *The X Factor*. Oh, they didn’t win? Quelle surprise. Mr McKenzie was never going to be embraced by the moist conservative fold he’d latterly chosen to follow, which seemed to be more a search for belonging than a serious political endeavour. It’s a shame that search concluded on the end of a string pulled by a group of people who have openly aired their disgust, or at best indifference, towards people like him.

You might say the country made a similar decision when it granted the Tories a clear victory in May. Democracy dictated that the politics of self-interest, dead-eyed technocrats and horsey types whose surnames grace the Domesday book should once again govern our nation. Not as a specific, distinct and frankly disturbing phase in our cultural history, but as a restoration of the “norm”. It is normal – and

desirable – that some people have power and others do not. The figure of Jeremy Corbyn being cast as “unelectable” is interesting, not only because it sows the seeds of doubt in the people who would vote for him (thereby rendering him electable, and elected) but because it says a lot about who we give power to and why; it says a lot about the kind of culture we are creating.

A friend of mine put it very succinctly in a roundtable we published with the *Feminist Review* a couple of years ago: “I think that what we’re going to see is more and more representation in various forms, while our material situations become more precarious. As we see ourselves enshrined in culture and celebrated, we will see our benefits go, we will see the state being dismantled: it’ll be very easy to be out and proud in the *Guardian* and it will be very difficult to get a job with a proper contract.”

What worries me is the fact that queer culture is being co-opted, re-branded and reframed so that it is no longer about a distinct group putting forward an alternative vision for humanity, but about said group blending into the thing which once despised us, so long as we leave most of what we are at the door. And, more importantly, do not demand that one of our rank calls the shots. We are all “unelectable” unless we subscribe to a narrow

WHO SAYS
SHE’D BE
UNELECTABLE,
ASKS JAY
BERNARD

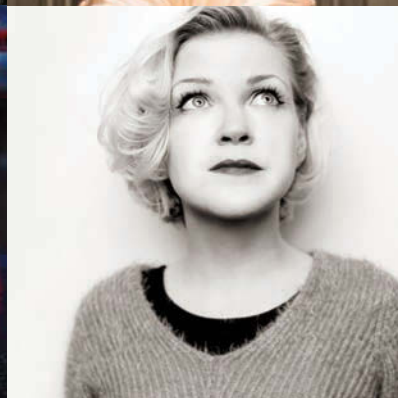
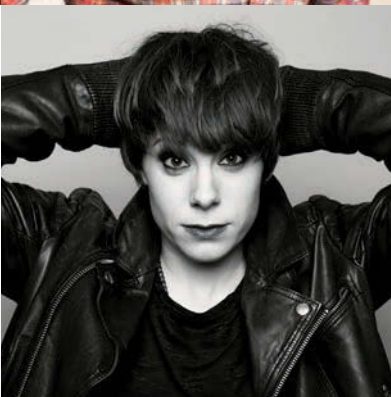
economic ideology, and even then... So it is very strange to watch a UKIP bloc at Pride, or a film such as *Jenny’s Wedding* in which the values of those who once had a boot on our necks become the hottest shit around.

There’s a poem which questions this. It’s called *I Want A Dyke For President* by Zoe Leonard, and it’s worth remembering: “I want someone with bad teeth and an attitude, someone who has eaten that nasty hospital food, someone who crossdresses and has done drugs and been in therapy.” Yes, it’s hard to imagine. Yes, the world is complicated. But it’s always worth asking why and who made it that way.

Remember the woman on *Question Time*, on the verge of tears, appealing to Conservative MP Amber Rudd about her child tax credits? Remember the way presenter David Dimbleby swiftly moved on? The visceral effect of that betrayal was palpable. And it’s not just with the Tories – anyone can be a conservative these days! You just have to subscribe to the idea that making money is more important than any other social value. You have to be happy with the way ordinary people are cast as being unfit to rule ourselves, so that another, more powerful class can quietly get on with what they’ve done for centuries. **D**

Ordinary
people are
cast as
being unfit
to lead
ourselves

jay@divamag.co.uk, @brnmrd



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We don't want a referendum!

MARY HASSAN
SAYS: STOP
CALLING FOR
A MARRIAGE
EQUALITY
REFERENDUM
IN NORTHERN
IRELAND



Dearest Divas, I know you mean well. I know you want to see your Northern Irish sisters tying the knot and having big queer wed-

dings just like in the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain. Believe me, I do too. But speaking as one of those Northern Irish queer women, I'm on my knees pleading with you. Please, PLEASE stop suggesting that we follow Ireland's example by having a marriage equality referendum.

Northern Ireland is a strange little enigma of a country with even stranger politics. In the Republic, we were very fortunate that all sides of the political spectrum backed the Yes vote. This is simply not the case in the North. On the fifth attempt, the motion for marriage equality won a majority in Stormont, but it was vetoed through the Democratic Unionist Party's misuse of the Petition of Concern. Our leading party is effectively blocking democracy, despite their name. It has been turned into a Nationalist/Unionist issue, with very few brave souls defect-

ing to "the other side" in support of their LGBT constituents.

But what's more, in the Republic, the referendum had a binding legal effect. I cannot emphasise this point enough – in Northern Ireland, a referendum would be nothing more than an incredibly expensive, time-intensive opinion poll. Our politicians would be under no obligation whatsoever to make any legal changes in the event of a Yes vote. In the Republic of Ireland a referendum was deemed to be necessary because it would result in a constitutional change. Marriage equality in Northern Ireland does not require a referendum to achieve these changes – it can and should be reached through normal legislation.

I live right on the border with the Republic. A minute's walk from where I grew up is a tiny Irish town (ironically) called Muff. In the lead-up to the marriage equality referendum, I went from house to house knocking on doors, basically begging people to vote Yes. I can promise you that no part of going up to a stranger's door to ask for your rights is enjoyable. In fact, it's pretty horrible. I was gut-churningly nervous every single time I rang a doorbell. You

never know what reaction you're going to get when that person appears in the doorway. I have had holy water thrown at me, been told I'm going to hell and everything in between. If it comes to it, I'll be first out the door to go knocking all over again.

But I don't want to see a European precedent start to emerge where it becomes acceptable to call for a vote on whether or not minorities should have access to the same basic civil rights as the majority.

So if not a referendum, what's the plan? We are putting our faith in the courts. A number of couples are bringing legal action to challenge the same-sex marriage ban through the courts in Northern Ireland, right up to the European court of human rights if necessary. The sad reality is that if queer rights haven't been given to us directly from Westminster, then they have come through the courts. With Westminster rendered powerless, I'm seriously hoping judicial safeguards will pull through for us again. **D**

Mary Hassan is an LGBT rights activist in Northern Ireland who works for Belfast's rainbow-project.org.

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going up
to a
stranger's
door to ask
for your
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enjoyable



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All in the eyes?

RESEARCHERS SAY ALMOST ALL WOMEN ARE QUEER BUT WHERE DOES THAT GET US, ASKS CHARLOTTE COOPER



There is a world of difference between what takes place in a psychology laboratory and what gets published in the press as fact.

This has been shown through a recent piece of Groundbreaking! Pioneer-ing! State-of-the-art! research led by Dr Gerulf Rieger at the University of Essex. But sometimes it is the research design that raises unsettling questions, especially when it is queers who are under the microscope.

Rieger's thing is whether or not pupil dilation is a good indicator of sexuality. I say sexuality, but in a laboratory setting this means whether or not a person gets turned on by a video of someone the researcher thinks might be attractive. When you've been an academic for some time, your interests become pretty esoteric and apparently there's a debate raging about the best way to measure arousal; through your privates or through your eyes. To cut a long story short, Rieger has done an experiment on 345 women to find out if their pupils dilate when they're turned on by a video of someone hot. They found that it's not only lesbians and bisexuals who get off on videos of women, the straights are into them too. From this the researchers concluded that most women are not heterosexual.

Is this research suggesting that straight women are a myth or a minority?

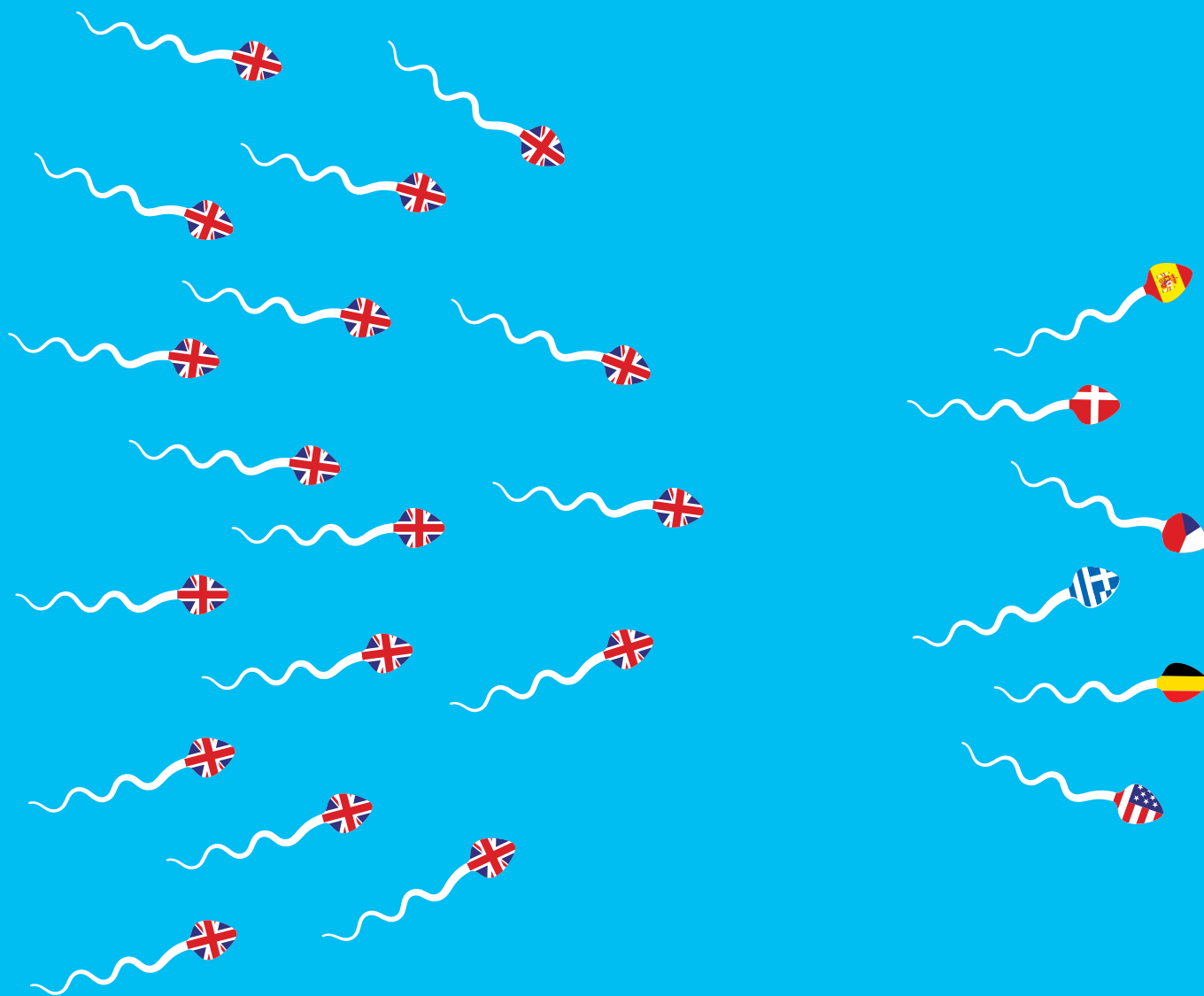
It is from this point that the questions start coming thick and fast. Is this research suggesting that heterosexual women are a myth or a minority? This finding would probably go down very well with misandrist lesbians and bisexual women. It provides unassailable scientific evidence at last that none of us really like doing it with men and only do so because it is expected of us. Perhaps this study could be used to legitimise shipping all the guys off to some distant island so we never have to look at them again. But have the researchers ever read any of Andrea Dworkin's work on penetrative sex? Are they aware that enjoying getting fucked by a dick is the basis of some of the most bitter in-fighting that has ever happened in queer feminist communities? Does this work make use of feminist philosophy about sex and desire? If not, why not? The potential application of this finding does not give me warm and fuzzy feelings for being part of a majority queer constituency, it makes me feel afraid that those who love and want to have sex with men will become demonised.

Or is the research providing evidence that there are more queers out there than previously assumed, and that this needs addressing in some way? If so, how come you need an experiment on 345 women from the University of Essex to advocate for this? Why not just ask any roving ho-

mosexual on the street? Why does this knowledge have to be produced via a laboratory, a university, a research team, an academic journal? How come they get to authenticate what is already deeply known by the rest of us? I'm asking but I know the answer: it's because our knowledge does not count, it is not respectable enough.

It's kind of weird when your life is distilled into a psychology lab and written up as a research report. By weird I mean creepy. Desire, identity and sexuality are lived things and enormously influenced by social context and temporalities, that is place, culture and time. Pupil dilation is not the same thing. On top of this, why would psychologists try and make conclusions about sexuality based on the consumption of the moving image, ideas of attractiveness, gender binaries, epistemologies (how people know things, for example through science, art, experience) and categories of sexuality that have been long-ago critiqued, chewed-over and debunked in pretty much every other field? I want surgeons to be able to fix me when I'm broken, pilots to fly me, computers to enable me to obsessively read the Twitter feeds of people I want to date, so I'm not anti-science. But I don't understand how this study serves queer people. To whom is it accountable? **D**

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Hello New Year, goodbye old



So it's 2016, and I'll be honest with you, dear readers, it couldn't come quickly enough. The last few months of 2015 comprised

a never-ending catalogue of upsetting and depressing incidents that meant I was willing the end of the year to advance with more speed than usual.

In October my beloved cat Muppet passed away quite suddenly, leaving me bereft. He was my best friend for 15 years and was with me in good times and bad, purring and snoring by my side. When no human being wanted to spend time with me he was always there to keep me company and make me feel loved. Not long after that, my wife's gran passed away the day before her 90th birthday, which was, as you can imagine, an awful time for the whole family. She was a fabulous woman who accepted me as part of her brood without qualification, presenting me with 10 pounds as a birthday present, which was exactly the same as the rest of her grandchildren received. In truth, the last few months of the year were spent randomly bursting into tears at the smallest thing, mired in gloom about those we had lost.

Many of you may embrace the same

feeling of relief at the start of a new year that I have. Psychologically, it's helpful to be able to draw a line under a difficult period of time and try to move on. Maybe it's because of the purge that takes place at the stroke of midnight when (some of us) drink ourselves silly with the manic energy that only comes from long and sustained inebriation. Maybe it's the simple fact that seeing the date of a new year on letters and documents speeds the passing of time and makes painful events seem farther away.

Whether or not a new year makes any difference, I do like to treat it as a fresh start in many ways. I always make sure that before the bells I take all the rubbish out of my house. It's a superstition my mother drilled into me, so that I start the New Year with a clean slate. As part of the cleanse over the Christmas period I also clear out books, clothes, assorted DVDs and unwanted possessions, and take them to a charity shop. It ensures that I start the year uncluttered and unfettered by unnecessary material goods.

But these practical things are just the precursor to my favourite New Year ritual, truly the most joyous part of Hogmanay. As a rule, I always try to be positive in my life, as negativity is a pervasive emotion that can take root and destroy happiness. But once a year

SUSAN CALMAN
CLEARS OUT
THE RUBBISH
AND LOOKS
FORWARD
TO 2016

I give myself permission to get it all out. I take myself away from any party or gathering I'm at and find somewhere I can be alone. I raise a glass to the skies and say, "fuck you" to everyone who, in my view, deserves it. The purpose of it is to remind myself that no matter what happens I'm still here, that those who have tried to bring me down in the previous 12 months (deliberately or otherwise) haven't achieved their stated aims. That I have, and always will, prevail.

It sounds negative but it's actually a very cathartic experience, to see out the last minutes of a year standing proud, howling at the moon and letting the universe know that I will not be defeated, no matter what it throws at me. Some people appear on the list every year, which is a reminder that some problems don't go away. Some disappear and I can't really recall why I was so upset at them. But all of them are expunged from my mind in one massive, joyous moment.

It means I'll start 2016 the way I always do, with a genuine feeling of positivity for what might happen in the next 12 months and knowing that I've banished my own personal demons. I've made my list and screamed it to the stars. I am Calman. Hear me roar. **D**

susan@divamag.co.uk

I spend
the last
minutes of
the year
howling at
the moon

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BOMBASTIC

LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION?
UGANDAN LGBT ACTIVIST
KASHA NABAGESERA HAS IT IN
BUCKETFULS

WORDS CARRIE LYELL

If you look up “inspirational” in the dictionary, you’ll find a picture of Kasha Nabagesera. Well, that’s not strictly true, but it should be. In 2010, she was voted the world’s most inspiring queer woman, and she’s received countless other awards and accolades for her activism, including the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the “alternative Nobel Peace Prize”, and the cover of Time magazine earlier this year.

“It’s a great honour for me to be on the cover because it brings attention to the global LGBT struggle,” Nabagesera told the Advocate. “Now many people will know about the struggles LGBT people go through in Africa and the world over.”

It’s well deserved. The 35-year-old, known to her friends as Bombastic, has spent the last 16 years fighting for LGBT rights in Uganda, and refuses to back down despite regular intimidation, threats and violence. “I can’t count how many times I’ve been beaten,” she says.

It’s that grit and determination in the face of extreme adversity that’s earned her the title of “founding mother of the Ugandan LGBT civil rights movement” and has made her a household name in Kampala and beyond.

But with that recognition comes danger, particularly somewhere like Uganda, where being gay is illegal and carries a maximum penalty of life behind bars. Her photograph was published on that now infamous Rolling Stone front page under the headline “Hang Them” and Nabagesera, who still lives in Uganda with her partner, rarely leaves the house.

Still, Nabagesera, leader of the pioneering organisation FARUG for 10 years, is optimistic. Last year, she published Uganda’s first LGBT magazine, aptly titled Bombastic, and her tireless fight for equality continues to attract supporters from around the world. “I’m really hopeful for the movement in Uganda,” she says. “It’s the successes that keep us going.” **D**

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Scene Queens ^{by Queen Josephine} 3 **ALICYA EYO**

I WAS BORN IN LIVERPOOL AND I WAS A CRAZY SHY KID. MY MUM SENT ME TO A DANCE SCHOOL WHEN I WAS LITTLE TO HELP ME GAIN CONFIDENCE BUT THE 1ST DAY I JUST SAT AND WATCHED... BY DAY 2, HOWEVER, THERE WAS NO STOPPING ME.....



THEY INTRODUCED A DRAMA TEACHER TO THE SCHOOL AND I REALISED I LOVED ACTING EVEN MORE THAN DANCING!! I MUST'VE BEEN OK AT IT AS I PASSED MY EXAMS AND DID WELL IN COMPETITIONS



AT 14 I FORGOT ABOUT ACTING AS WE MOVED HOUSE AND I CONCENTRATED ON GETTING THROUGH SCHOOL. THEN, AT 17 AND ON MY FIRST DAY AT COLLEGE DOING BUSINESS AND FINANCE STUDIES I HAD A PANIC ATTACK



AROUND THE SAME TIME MY MUM PERSUADED ME TO BE TRUTHFUL ABOUT WHO I AM. IT WAS AN EVENTFUL YEAR!



I SPENT 3 YEARS AT DRAMA SCHOOL HAVING WON A SCHOLARSHIP (PHEW - WE WEREN'T RICH!) AND GOT MY FIRST ACTING JOB 6 MONTHS LATER. I'VE DONE LOTS OF JOBS TO PAY THE RENT IN BETWEEN ACTING SUCH AS WORKING IN CLOTHES SHOPS AND BEING AN USHERETTE.....



MY FIRST TV APPEARANCE IN 1997 WAS CASUALTY SWIFTLY FOLLOWED BY HETTY WAINTHROP INVESTIGATES, TUBE TALES AND URBAN GOTHIC.....



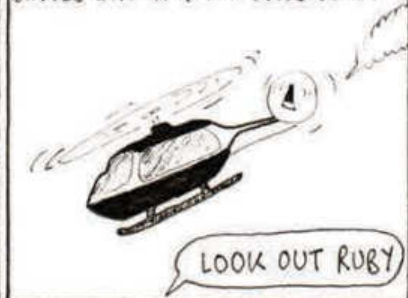
BESIDES TV I'VE WORKED IN THE THEATRE AND ON FILMS SUCH AS GMT-GREENWICH MEAN TIME AND WITH GOLDIE IN EVERYBODY LOVES THE SUNSHINE.....



IN 1999 I WAS THRILLED TO GET THE PART OF DENNY BLOOD IN BAD GIRLS. WHAT A RÔLE!! FAB - EVEN THOUGH MY 1ST EVER SCENE FEATURED ME DANCING TO THE N-TRANCE REMIX OF THE BEE GEES STAYING ALIVE. WEARING A PINK JUMPSUIT



AFTER 5 SERIES OF BAD GIRLS AND LOTS OF OTHER TV ROLES I JOINED THE CAST OF EMMERDALE IN 2011 AS RUBY HASWELL. I HAD SOME AMAZING STORY LINES, INCLUDING A LESBIAN WEDDING TO MY ON SCREEN PARTNER ALI. I LEFT IN AUGUST 2015 AMIDST HIGH DRAMA AFTER LOSING MY BATTLE WITH A HELICOPTER BLADE!!



NOW I'M LOVING BEING A JOBBING ACTOR AGAIN, ALONG WITH SUPPORTING THE PROUD TRUST CHARITY FOR YOUNG LGBT IN THE NORTH WEST. SO LIFE IS GOOD! LOOK OUT FOR ME IN TWO UP AND COMING EPS OF SILENT WITNESS, ALONG WITH PLenty MORE PROJECTS T.B.A IN 2016.....





PERSON OF THE MONTH

DJ RITU

This month we're celebrating the achievements of radio host and club promoter DJ Ritu. The highest-placed woman of colour on this year's Rainbow List at number 16, she began DJing in 1986 and was one of the first DJs to bring Indian sounds to countries like the UK. As well as launching her own record label and broadcasting on stations including BBC London, Radio 3 and Kiss 100, Ritu also co-founded the legendary Club Kali in 1995, providing a safe space for the Gaysian community that didn't exist previously. Hats off to you, Ritu.



WE LOVE

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Now that winter is here, what better way to keep the cold at bay than with a fruity Bramble Scotch Whisky Liqueur (23% ABV) – part port, part whisky – stowed in this nifty Outlaw 375ml hip flask bottle? With this little hipflask in your pocket, your cockles might just stay warmer, especially if you're planning to enjoy days and nights al fresco in the town or countryside or by the sea. For a cracking wintery cocktail with a kick, we recommend combining Bramble Scotch Whisky Liqueur with ginger wine. £20.96 from demijohn.co.uk. (AD)

CELEBRITY TWEETS

@TheEllenShow

I want my cat to hold my hand while I sleep.

@samirawiley

Thank you @violadavis for the tears that just ran all down my smoky eye.

@MsJamieClayton

Today I went to a recording studio to do my first ANIMATION VOICE OVER! It was A DREAM COME TRUE! I can't say what show yet. #sorry #TEASE

@skinskinny

So happy to see FGM banned in Nigeria!! First step to complete eradication!

@ingridnisen

If it's fried... I'll probably eat it.

@hillmangrad

the fact that there's no "frog sipping tea" emoji, really boils my blood.

@jenniferbeals

Help me celebrate my #birthday! Any donation to the @MalalaFund would be the #BestBirthdayGift ever. Really.

@margaretho

Should I bring a coat and a wig to Europe? Bald packing advice please? It's very cold being newly bald! How do u stay warm with a cold head?

@harto

I crave TV shows the way most people crave food. "Ooh... I could really go for some Simpsons right now..."

@PanjabiArchie

Bruges. What a magical town! Feels like being in a fairytale.

MEDIAWATCH WITH CARRIE LYELL

TAMPON TAX



Like me, thousands were enraged by the news that rather than scrapping the tampon tax, George Osborne has declared that the money it generates will go towards funding the work of women's charities. Now, at first glance, it might seem like Chancellor Georgie has turned over a new leaf and is getting soft in his old age. After all, charities providing services for vulnerable women are vitally important. But dig a little deeper and you'll see just how cruel this is. It's so awful, it's almost laughable, but forgive me if I don't feel like chuckling.

Journalist Holly Baxter gets it. In a brilliantly articulated piece in the Independent, she wrote: "Give a woman a tampon and she'll use it for free. Teach a woman to pay tampon tax and she won't even cost anything extra to the state when she gets raped, attacked or laid off at work."

Of course, I want women's charities to have as much financial support as possible. But they wouldn't be struggling so much if Osborne hadn't pulled the rug from under them in the first place in the name of austerity. And besides, we don't see men's health initiatives being funded by essential products for men. Oh yeah, that's because there are none. I forgot. Osborne says he's committed to eventually scrapping the 5% VAT, which must be paid on sanitary products under EU rules. What will become of these charities then? Hopefully he'll be putting his hands in his cashmere-lined pockets. Then again, pigs might fly. Saying that, so would we if David Cameron came anywhere near us.

Hey, laugh or you'll cry, right?

@Seej

READER'S REVIEW

OOH BY JE JOUE



If you're familiar with Je Joue, you'll know what great toys they make. My partner and I love them, but they're really expensive, so we were delighted when we discovered their "pick 'n' mix" sex toy selection, which offers pleasure without the price tag. Colourful and deliciously soft, there's nine different shapes to choose

from. It was a difficult decision, but we settled on number two (the classic vibrator) and number six (the mini vibrating pebble) and were ahem... satisfied with both. Changing the rechargeable motor half-way through can be a bit fiddly at first, but it didn't take us too long to get to grips with it, and we're already looking to add more shapes to our collection. Highly recommended. (KS)

oohjejoue.com



WE WERE THERE EQUALITY BALL

We were delighted to be at the first ever Equality Ball, held last month at Stratford's Old Town Hall in aid of the Peter Tatchell Foundation. The swanky fundraiser featured stunning performances from acts including Marc Almond, Ronan Parke and DIVA BFF Heather Peace, and it felt very special to be in the company of community heroes and guests of honour including Sir Ian McKellen. We can't wait for next year's event. To find out more about the work of the Peter Tatchell Foundation, check out the website petertatchellfoundation.org.





ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk

Out Canadian songstress
Jordan Alexander – due
to make waves in 2016

VOICES FROM THE FUTURE

Across both the mainstream and the underground, 2015 saw women use their voices and bodies to challenge, disrupt and complicate norms – eliciting everything from mild interest to attention-grabbing headlines, pushing forward conversations around identity, sexuality and desire in the process.

Genderqueer became mainstream news as a handful of high-profile young artists threw two fingers up to the binary. Feted rapper Angel Haze came out as agender (following a protracted break-up with Ireland Baldwin, sob) while Miley Cyrus declared herself genderqueer, turning a familiar rite of passage – wholesome child Disney star comes of age, goes wild – into an unexpectedly dyke-y spectacle: hanging with Joan Jett, hooking up with model Stella Maxwell, setting up LGBT youth charity Happy Hippie Foundation, wearing a 10" strap-on on stage and writing an ode to pussy in the song Bang Me Box.

After years of having faux female desire marketed to the male gaze, we've got savvy to queerbaiting in music – and this isn't it. Primetime pop is still a relatively conservative space, sure, but what we're witnessing is an increasing number of young, lady-loving stars making space for new ways of being, creating and communicating through music. Music should be a place where we can project, shape and situate ourselves. It's why we continue to ship* Taylor Swift with her latest bestie (Kaylor forever!), despite that never-ending string of cis male love interests.

No surprise then, against this backdrop, that many of mainstream pop's A-list femmes felt emboldened to correct assumptions around their (non-hetero) sexuality: Selina Gomez happily admitted to questioning hers after being linked her with pal Cara Delevingne; Demi Lovato came out as not-totally-straight during a chat with TV host Alan Carr when asked about her ode to grrrl fever, Cool For The Summer; and *Scream Queens* actress/singer Keke Palmer released I Don't Belong To You, a statement of queer, autonomous intent that came with a

steamy, Cassie-featuring video.

It could be argued that coming out is no biggie now. When British pop siren Jess Glynne revealed that her chart-topping debut *I Cry When I Laugh* was inspired by her first same-sex relationship break-up, the media response was positively chill compared to the fuss we'd have expected a decade ago. Perhaps this is because Glynne – like Cyrus, Haze and Palmer – refuses to identify with any particular community, declaring: "I'm never going to put a label on my sexuality." Celebrated rocker Annie "St Vincent" Clarke (Delevingne's current boo) is similarly non-committal, telling *Rolling Stone*: "I believe in gender fluidity and sexual fluidity. I don't really identify as anything."

Is this increasing rejection of lesbian and bisexual identity proof that today's female musicians aren't hung up on orientation? Or does it highlight peak lesbophobia – a way for lady-loving artists to be visible while circumventing the scrutiny and reductive pigeonholing that female artists historically endure after coming out? Perhaps it's both these things, simultaneously. Women who'd previously identified as L, G or B, such as indie hero Carrie Brownstein, certainly seem increasingly comfortable opting for Q (queer) when prodded on the issue.

Whatever the case – talented, shamelessly out women across genres gave us plenty to love in 2015: afrofuturistic duo THEESatisfaction released their second Sub Pop album, *Earthee* – a deep, funky work drawing holistic dots between our bodies, rhythms, his-

WHAT WILL
2016 LOOK LIKE
FOR QUEER
WOMEN IN
MUSIC? IF
2015 WAS ANY
INDICATOR,
IT'LL BE
ANOTHER
BOUNDARY-
PUSHING
YEAR, SAYS
CHARLOTTE
RICHARDSON
ANDREWS

It could
be argued
that, for
pop stars,
coming out
is no biggie
now

tory and nature; beloved indie rockers Sleater-Kinney reformed to give us the joyous, electrifying *No Cities To Love*, followed by guitarist Carrie Brownstein's music-memoir-of-the-year, *Hunger Makes Me A Modern Girl* and Peaches proved she can still a) shock, and b) rock with sixth album *Rub*.

While the ongoing lack of female performers and headliners at major music festivals such as Reading and Leeds continued to be a hot topic, queer women got busy making their own inclusive fests, from Queer Rock Camp in the US and Berlin's Yo Sissy, to the inaugural Bent Fest here in the UK where the queer DIY scene continues to proliferate (check out Big Joanie on p46).

So what can we look forward to in 2016? As tomorrow's talent follow the examples set by today's boundary-pushing champs, the forecast promises more boldly-out women in music – whether they identify as L, G, B, Q, genderqueer or fluid; more coming-out anthems by IRL queers rather than well-meaning allies (ie Macklemore and Sara Bareilles) and – fingers crossed – overtly same-sex love songs by women invading the Top 10. Most importantly, we'd like to see queer women continuing to shape their own narratives – whether that involves framing their sexuality as incidental, or pushing their queerness to the forefront of their art, where it can be seen and heard, on their own terms. ①

*Ship: short for relationship, popularised in fanfiction circles. To endorse a romantic relationship between two otherwise platonic heart throbs.

ONES TO WATCH IN 2016

HALSEY

Outspoken, bisexual, Brooklyn-based upstart making waves following the release of her 2015 debut album, *Badlands* – a rebellious, dark electropop opus. tinyurl.com/DIVA-Halsey

JORDAN ALEXANDER

Out Canadian songstress specialising in dreamy, airy "urban pop". Recently spotted supporting Jess Glynne and fellow Canucks, Tegan & Sara. Debut album *Lonely Hearts Club* is set for a spring 2016 release. tinyurl.com/DIVA-Jordan

CHRISTINE AND THE QUEENS

Queer French pop from Nantes-born Héloïse Letissier. Big in her homeland, Letissier – who moved to London to study in 2010 and found herself a muse in the arty theatre underworld of Soho – is now set to crack the UK. tinyurl.com/DIVA-Christine



SAVAGES

Adore Life (Matador)

How to follow up the dark, militant energy of Savages' feted debut, *Silence Yourself*? With a paean to love, of course. London's most thrilling rockers still deal in bruising, jagged noise. But if their first LP was post-punk armored, with fists-up, *Adore Life* is a violent, glorious reveal – generous where *Silence Yourself* was austere, exploring connection over resistance. Or, "Words of hope in a world of doom," as frontwoman Jehnny Beth puts it.



SKUNK ANANSIE

Anarchytecture (100%)

Skunk Anansie's 90s Brit-rock titans are back, following up 2010's *Black Traffic* with a third post-hiatus stomper. Expect propulsive, nocturnal rhythms – from vampy dub (*Victim*) and dark disco (*Back Room*) to hard, gargantuan rock (*We Are The Flames*) – powered by former DIVA cover star Skin's still-unfuck-withable falsetto.



SANTIGOLD

99¢ (*Atlantic*)

The genre-mashing sounds Santigold pioneered in the late noughties don't pack quite the same punch next to today's increasingly adventurous beatsmiths. But the Brooklyn-raised polymath's skill for shape-shifting beats is still mighty, melding neon pop jams against darker, dubby fare on this energetic, playfully political third album.

MUSIC

LIVE

Things tend to wind down after December's glut of Yuletide parties, leaving January pretty fallow on the gig calendar front. But 2016 promises to be different: American rapper Angel Haze returns to our shores for a spate of fresh dates (12-16 Jan) and Kele Okereke's newly-reformed indie vets Bloc Party are set rock the UK once again, boasting new tunes and a new line-up (29 Jan-Feb 12). And if you're quick, Texas fans can catch Sharleen Spiteri and co live in December, when the Scottish rockers tour their anniversary release, *Texas 25* (13-19 Dec).

LIZZO

Big GRRRL Small World (BGSW)

Big Grrrl sees Lizzo's Minneapolis-based rapper make good on her 2013 debut, *Lizzobangers* (remember *Batches And Cookies?*). From body-positive self-love anthems to Black Lives Matter-inspired meditations, album two delivers nuanced, double-dutch bars over XXL basslines. Watch this "poster child for big, black ambition" GO.

TUFF LOVE

Resort (Lost Map)

This first full-length from Glasgow duo Tuff Love isn't an album proper, but rather a compilation, collecting their three self-produced EPs: *Junk*, *Dross* and *Dregs*. Expect dreamy, fuzzy guitar pop, edged with a little grit – C86-inspired harmonies cut through with pleasantly pealing fret notes.

RADAR

WHAT HAPPENED, MISS SIMONE?

Dir Liz Garbus | FILM

Liz Garbus' harrowing but brilliant study of the late, great and often misunderstood icon, Nina Simone.

THE LIGHT PRINCESS

Tori Amos | SOUNDTRACK

The thrilling Tori Amos-scored 2013 stage musical has finally earned an audio release. Relive the magic.

MISSY ELLIOT

WTF (Where They From) | SINGLE

A surprise, internet-breaking return from the much-missed rap superstar. This is not a drill: MISSY IS BACK.

ROOM

Dir Lenny Abrahamson



Extremely faithful to Emma Donoghue's best-selling novel – she both adapted and produced the film – *Room* may still surprise fans of the book. The story's genius is its optimistic take on the worst horrors undergone by women, presenting them through the innocent eyes of a child, here played by brilliant newcomer Jacob Tremblay. On film, the danger feels even more menacing and the relationship between the mother and child protagonists is painfully moving. Wobbly close-ups and a womb-like soundtrack of throbs and lullabies cleverly present us with five-year-old Jack's perspective, from which we have the perfect view of Brie Larson's powerful performance.

In cinemas 15 January

SISTERS

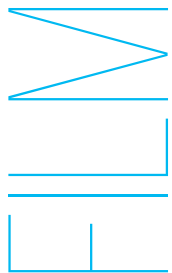
Dir Jason Moore



They might be among the funniest women of the Western world, but do we really think Tina Fey and Amy Poehler can get away with making jokes about lesbians? Ok, I'll admit it – they can, and I promise I wasn't just buttered up by the rapid backpedalling into positive stereotypes and casting of (The L Word's) Heather Matarazzo. Scripted by long-running Saturday Night Live writer Paula Pell, *Sisters* takes perfect comedic aim at teenagerhood, adulthood and those who can't tell the difference, and it's as silly and brilliant as a synchronised dance routine. Plus, Tina Fey finally drops the self-deprecating persona to drop-dead-gorgeous effect.

In cinemas 18 December

ONLINE



Well-meaning: Alicia Vikander and Eddie Redmayne in *The Danish Girl*

THE DANISH GIRL

Dir Tom Hooper

This well-meaning drama about Lili Elbe, one of the first trans women to undergo sex reassignment surgery, is probably going to disappoint queer audiences. Eddie Redmayne's searching, subtle central performance destabilises gender preconceptions, but wouldn't we rather have a trans actor in the role? Despite a sex scene featuring Lili in a nightie, the film raises and tosses aside the idea that she and her wife Gerda might be in a lesbian relationship (though why else would Gerda have made Lili the subject of her Tamara de Lempicka-style art?) Plus, we're bored of "romantically" sad endings for queer characters on film.

In cinemas 1 January

TEENAGE ROMANCE
FEAR OF WATER

We started looking forward last year to this story of flirtatious female friendship, and the DVD has finally dropped. Starring *Skins*' Lily Loveless, it tackles romantic yearnings across the class divide, blossoming amid dysfunctional families and small-town boredom. The low-key but tender love story is played out against a lesbian/bi-penned soundtrack.

Find out more and buy the film at fearofwatermovie.com

QUIRKY QUEER CAPER
ALL ABOUT E

Troubled – but sultry – DJ e finds a bag full of cash and doesn't want to give it back in this colourful Aussie road movie. Stir together plane-based action sequences, long-lost love with an angelic ex, hot sex, second-generation angst and a surprising amount of clarinet playing, for a ridiculous but likeable cinematic cocktail.

Find out more and buy the US edition at WolfeVideo.com

BISEXUAL BIOPIC
THE HONOURABLE REBEL

Aristocrat, actress and spy Elizabeth Montagu had an action-packed life, including affairs with both men and women and a clandestine escape from occupied France during the second world war. This biopic tells her story through interviews, a voiceover by Diana Rigg, and plenty of dramatic reconstructions, some more convincing than others.

Find out more at facebook.com/thehonourablerebel

SPORT
PRIDE SPORTS

Get active with this UK organisation making an effort to challenge homophobia and inequality in sport and improve access to sport for LGBT people and provide encouragement too. pridesports.org.uk

• VIDEO
• WHAT'S
• UNDERNEATH

The more we watch this video featuring Lea DeLaria, the more we love it. The OITNB star oozes confidence as she encourages us all to be body positive. tinyurl.com/DIVALEaLove

• GIFTS
• MRS & MRS

Can't find anything in the shops for that newly married couple in your life? Pink and Turquoise have a large range of high quality, affordable and unique gifts that'll make you say I Do. pinkandturquoise.co.uk

ONLINE



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ON THE WEB
SHE SAID

We're head over heels for this new webseries from Amy Poehler's Smart Girls hosted by total babes Cameron Esposito and Rhea Butcher. Insightful, informative and accessible, and with topics including feminism and the female bod, this is one of the best things to hit the web in YEARS. Watch now at amysmartgirls.com.

WE LOVE
**SUPERSHOPPERS
DO CHRISTMAS**

Andi Osho and Anna Richardson return to present the inside scoop on Britain's biggest brands and retailers in time for the Christmas shop. Investigating everything festive, from food to decorations and gifts, Anna and Andi reveal the tricks of the trade, and put products to the test, with some surprising results.

Channel 4, 14 December, 8.30 or catch up on All4.

CATCH UP
**ROLLER DERBY: SKATE
FAST, HIT HARD**

This captivating 20-minute documentary takes a look at Europe's fastest-growing female sport through the eyes of skaters Kiki Kapok and Barbarsim and their teams, Rainy City Roller Girls and the North Cheshire Victory Rollers, and will have you dusting off your skates in no time.

Available exclusively on BBC iPlayer.

NOVEMBER
TELEVISION

Dark laughs: Tig Notaro (right) and Casey Wilson in *One Mississippi*



PICK
OF THE
MONTH

ONE MISSISSIPPI

Everyone needs to watch this dark comedy loosely based on the life of comedian Tig Notaro. As part of Amazon's pilot season, *One Mississippi* follows Tig as she deals with the complex re-entry into her childhood hometown to deal with the unexpected death of her mother. Reeling from her own recently declining health, Tig struggles to find her footing with the loss of the one person who actually understood her, with help from her older but not always wiser brother, Remy, played by Noah Harpster (*Transparent*), and her emotionally distant stepfather, Bill, played by John Rothman (*The Devil Wears Prada*). A surprise visit from Tig's girlfriend, Brooke, played by Casey Wilson (*Gone Girl*) only compounds the reality of how out of place Tig is in a world without her mother. Like it? Make sure you provide feedback – we'd love to see this made into a full series.

Available now on Prime Video

WHAT WE'RE WATCHING
HOW TO GET AWAY WITH MURDER

We're completely addicted to this compelling series, which stars Academy Award winner Viola Davis as law professor Annalise Keating who challenges her students to solve some of the most difficult cases taken on by her law firm. The critically acclaimed show, which saw Davis become the first woman of colour to win an Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress, has more twists and turns than a F1 racing course, and deserves to be your new favourite show. Get watching.

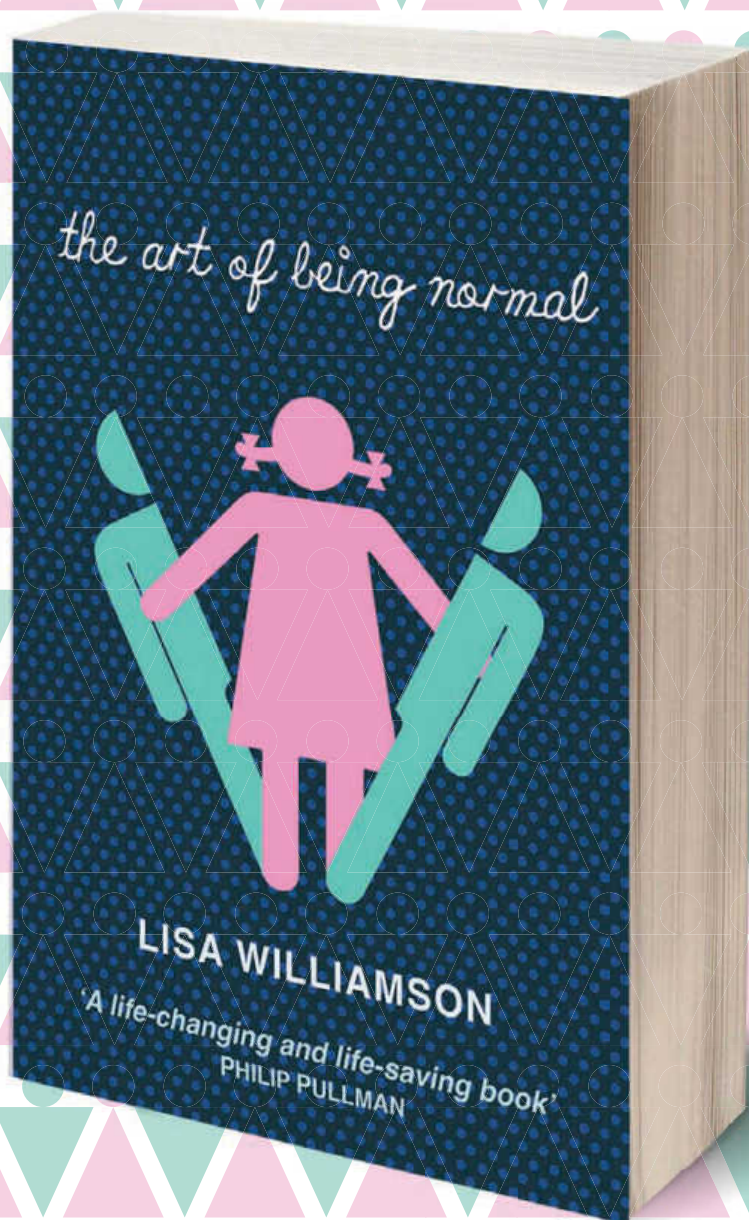
Wednesdays, Universal HD, 9pm

DON'T MISS
**FIRST DATES:
THE PROPOSAL**

'Tis the season to be jolly as Christmas arrives at the First Dates restaurant. Maitre d' Fred and his team host a special festive party to celebrate the love that blossomed this year, with a host of familiar faces. Will there be a happily ever after for 27-year-old Jo and her date Ni as they ret the place v it all began? There's onl way to finc Channel 4, 17 December, 9pm, or catch up on All4



THE TRANSGENDER BESTSELLER THAT EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



dick
b
David Fickling Books

AN ENGROSSING, MOVING EXPLORATION OF GENDER, IDENTITY,
ATTRACTION AND JUST WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "NORMAL" (METRO)

Buy from your local Waterstones or Waterstones.com

#WHATISNORMAL



ROM-COM
ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

Clare Lydon

Keep the winter chill away with this festive romance in which Tori Hammond, desperate to find the woman of her dreams, sets herself a Christmas deadline. Her dating efforts provide a lot of laughs, with the Jenny sex scene particularly excruciating. A treat. Custard Books, £9.99, eBook £3.79



SELF-HELP
LESBIAN LOVE ADDICTION

Dr Lauren D Costine

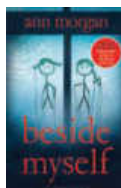
A thought-provoking lesbian-centred analysis of ideas around love addiction and the “urge to merge”, whereby individuals repeatedly chase the emotional intensity of new real or imagined relationships. Costine suggests strategies for those who would like to understand, heal and develop healthier behaviours. Rowman & Littlefield, £23.95



YA FICTION
THE ART OF BEING NORMAL

Lisa Williamson

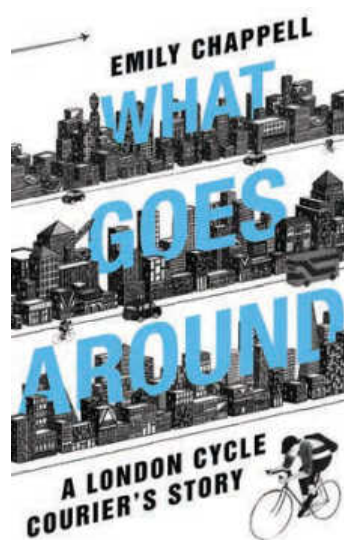
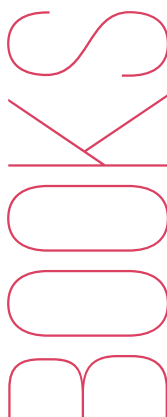
Asked by a teacher what he wants to be, eight-year-old David responds, “I want to be a girl”. Now 14 and bullied, his friendship with new kid Leo, who has his own challenges, provides unexpected support. Well-written and empathetic, and now available in paperback. David Fickling Books, £7.99



THRILLER
BESIDE MYSELF

Ann Morgan

As children, identical twins Ellie and Helen swap places for a day. Then, to Helen’s dismay, Ellie refuses to switch back. The ongoing repercussions of this life-altering act make for a gripping, often unsettling psychological thriller. Bloomsbury Circus, £12.99, eBook £10.99



NON-FICTION

WHAT GOES AROUND

Emily Chappell

Back in 2008, encouraged by her new girlfriend Ash, Emily Chappell joined the ranks of London’s cycle couriers, darting around the streets of the capital delivering packages. At the time she considered it a stopgap job after finishing her master’s degree, but seven years later she’s still in the saddle. What Goes Around is the story of those years, a collection of anecdotes and memories that is part personal history, part portrait of the city. Chappell is a marvelous writer, and the

book reads rather like a bike ride with its succession of turns and unexpected discoveries: a trip in a gay ambulance, random conversations with strangers, an alarming road rage incident. Interspersed with tales of burst tire rims and rare forgotten packages is the story of her relationship and break up with fellow courier Ash. The joy of cycling is at its heart, however; if any book could make you consider chucking in your desk job and throwing on some Lycra, this would be it.

Guardian Faber, £12.99 eBook £8.99



FICTION

PAULINA AND FRAN

Rachel B Glaser

The complexities of female friendship and the disappointments of adulthood are the subjects of this smart, at times frenetic novel following the intense relationship between American art school students Paulina and Fran who drift apart after graduation. One for fans of TV show Girls. Granta, £12.99



SUSPENSE

SIGHT LINES

Michelle DiCeglio

Bereaved detective Lacey Mills is on the bloody trail of a prolific serial killer when she meets lovely web designer Ali and swiftly decides to give love another go. Ali is not all she appears to be, however. A retro mystery with a pulp noir feel, set in Ohio.

Ellora’s Cave, eBook £3.99



THRILLER

THE RED FILES

Lee Winter

Australian journalist and lesbian author Lee Winter’s debut is a slightly cartoonish LA-set romantic thriller in which acid-tongued entertainment journalists Lauren and Catherine exchange prickly banter and deal with some serious sexual tension while investigating a political scandal. Ylva Publishing, £11.99, eBook £4.99

Carrie on kicking ass

Marvel's latest offering has barely stopped trending on Twitter since it hit Netflix last month, and for good reason. It's gritty, it's exciting, and it's highly addictive. Plus: lesbians. We caught up with Jessica Jones star Carrie-Anne Moss to find out more about her character, Jeri Hogarth.

DIVA: What can you tell us about your character in *Jessica Jones*?

CARRIE-ANNE MOSS: My character's name is Jeri Hogarth, and I'm a very strong, ruthless, powerful woman who employs Jessica because she's really the only one who seems to be able to get the job done.

You've played several strong women in the past. Is that important to you when choosing a role?

No, I wouldn't say that. I think I've played mostly strong women because I am one. I don't think strength has to look just one way though. I think there are lots of vulnerable strong women too. So, is it important to me? Character's important to me. Maybe I am attracted to strong women, but I also think that they kind of find their way to me because I represent that a little bit. That energy, maybe.

You're probably best known for your role as Trinity from the *Matrix* films. Are there any similarities between Trinity and Jeri?

No, I wouldn't say so. At all. Except that I'm playing them both [laughs].

So they look alike!

Yeah, so they look a lot alike [laughs]. But no, I wouldn't say so. It's totally different. Trinity was all heart. She was a warrior, but she was a heart warrior. [Jeri] is not coming from her heart. She's a lot more ruthless.

DIVA CAUGHT UP WITH HOLLYWOOD STAR CARRIE-ANNE MOSS TO FIND OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE PLAYING MARVEL'S FIRST LESBIAN CHARACTER

INTERVIEW
CARRIE LYLE

"I think I've mostly played strong women because I am one"

Is she a baddie then?

I wouldn't say she was a baddie. I just think that her ethics are questionable, and her need to win and her need to get what she wants supersedes anything else.

This incarnation of Hogarth is Marvel's first lesbian character. How does it feel to be making history in that way?

It's always great to do something for the first time. It's great that we're living in a time when everyone is being represented in a more balanced way. We're bringing it up, it's become part of our culture, and it should be. That's great.

Hogarth's sexuality isn't the be all and end all of her character. Is that important, do you think?

Yeah. I think that's good. You don't want to be playing clichés, right? You don't want to be playing the idea of anyone. The idea of a woman, or the idea of a man, or the idea of someone who's a lesbian. To play a character for all that it is, not just one facet of who they are. And that really comes down to the writing.

There seems to be a fair amount of sexual tension between Krysten Ritter's character and yourself, but we know they're not exactly friends, so how would you describe their relationship?

I find [Jessica] annoying and yet intriguing, and I need her, and I don't love that I need her. I mean, she's a real pain in the ass. She just walks in whenever she wants, she has no respect for my space or who I am in my world. Everyone walks around kind of nervous of her, you know, but Jessica doesn't care. She just bursts into my office, interrupts whatever I'm doing.

But they need each other and neither of them want to need each other but they do.

What about the other women in Jeri's life? How does she treat them? Is she a bit of a player?

She's very, very self-obsessed. Very narcissistic. She's jeopardising [her lifestyle] for somebody young and attractive. She makes decisions, in her personal life anyway, based on sex, actually.

It's not the kind of role that women normally get to play.

No, we see that with men a lot, right? We see that in our lives [laughs], we see that in TV, in movies, that idea. It's a stereotype, and yet it happens a lot. We're so used to seeing the older guy with the young girl. Or the younger woman. And this is that kind of version of it for Jeri where she's less complicated, it's more fun, she's idolised by this young person and it makes her feel good. But she's not really thinking it through completely either.

Such a rare opportunity. Was that fun to play?

Yeah, I loved that. I loved all the relationships with all the women. Jessica Jones and Trish Walker, their relationship, I thought it was great. And it's not all told to you. I loved the storytelling of this show, and I loved the complexities of those characters. It wasn't this idea of how women are often portrayed on television. I liked the dimensions of all of the characters. I think the writing is really strong. You can't have a show or a movie or anything unless your writing is really strong.

Your character Hogarth, as Marvel fans will know, was a man in the comic books. What was the thinking

behind that gender flip?

You know, I don't know. You'd have to ask them! They mentioned it to me and I knew that, but who knows [why]. Marvel is very, very protective of their content and very protective of their process so... I have no idea! Honestly.


It strikes me as a very feminist show, and in 2015, that is still kind of revolutionary. What kind of lessons do you think other shows can learn from Jessica Jones?

Great question. Well, I think that having a female show runner, having a female lead, having so many female characters... if the show does as well as I hope it does, I think that it can really [change things]. I mean, look at *Orange Is The New Black*. It's all women! [laughs] It's happening. It is happening. Look at *Grace And Frankie*. We've got two women in their late 60s. That wasn't really happening before, in American television anyway.

The shows you've mentioned though are all Netflix. Would we see those kind of characters or shows on network TV?

When you're on a network show, you're completely creating your content to please advertising. So when you are doing that, the creative process is changed. Whereas [on Netflix] you're just creating really good content that your audience is going to love, and you're not looking to please everybody, and you're not looking to just please your advertising people, I think a lot of freedom happens.

It has completely revolutionised how we watch and consume TV. It's very exciting.

Oh, it is exciting. I remember when it first came out, I really couldn't understand it or wrap my head around it. And now, that's like the only thing I watch. Just Netflix. For me, I have windows of time – like all of us. I have my career, I have my kids, I have my family. And I get these windows of time... I almost watched the whole season of *Grace And Frankie* the other day. I was working, and I was in a hotel, and I had a few hours so I could keep watching it and it was so fun. It felt like such a treat. The ultimate guilty pleasure! 

All 13 episodes of *Jessica Jones* are available to stream on Netflix now.



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk

Remember Trinity? Matrix star
Carrie-Anne Moss is back as Jeri
Hogarth in Marvel's *Jessica Jones*

Cherry bomb



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk

To describe Tony Award-winning actress Cherry Jones as a dynamo is an understatement. She cured me of my jetlag, that's for sure, the night I met her at a friend's house this past August. She was busy filming season two of Amazon Prime's seminal drama *Transparent*, and relayed a story about a scene in a hot-tub with such panache that I forgot I hadn't really slept for days.

When I caught up with her I reminded her that, to protect against any spoilers, she had carefully omitted to mention who else was in the hot-tub scene. When I asked her to reveal her hot-tub cohabitee, she made me guess. I got it right on the third attempt.

"Yes, I hang out with Ali, whose narrative arc is very rich in season two, and my character, I am happy to say, is quite crucial to that arc."

"I play a dude dyke," she says, with laughter breaking through her slight Tennessee drawl, "a gender studies professor, who is 'snugly' rather than 'loosely' based on the poet Eileen Myles." (Myles also receives more than a passing nod in Lily Tomlin's hysterical new film *Grandma*.)

She describes the relationship between her character and Gaby Hoffman's Ali, as a "slow, slow kind of courtship where something may or may not happen".

She clearly relishes being in, what she calls "the show that busts the last taboo" and thanks the show's creator, Jill Soloway, for bringing "transgender 101 to the viewers and for making us realise that there are still very few safe havens for trans people".

"I watched the first season and just gobbled it up. I remember thinking, 'Oh why can't I be in that show?' Then I got the call. I remember the first day of filming. I walked in and I was starstruck. Not by the actors but their characters. It felt like I had fallen into

Alice In Wonderland."

She calls herself an "old lesbian" (I sense here she means "old school" rather than "old age") who had to get used her character's sexual appetite. "I have a series of extremely young girlfriends and spend much of the time with my arms wrapped around them or with them in my bed."

"I remember thinking, 'I hope my folks back in Tennessee don't see this'. But you know what? This show, which is pretty much non-stop sexual exploration and which shocks and intrigues, has a much healthier feel than many other American shows.

"For years I have turned down television drama roles because I am very much opposed to violence. I get sick to my stomach by television violence, which is ratcheted up by misogyny and is sucking us down as a nation."

Making such a brave stand, especially after winning an Emmy for playing President Allison Taylor in *24*, hasn't impacted on offers of work. In what has been a busy year, she straddled her "dude dyke" role with that of a real-life matriarch, the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald, in the forthcoming series *11.22.63*, in which the James Franco character is transported back in time in an attempt to prevent the assassination of JFK.

"I loved diving into the skin of Marguerite Oswald because she was a piece of work. Y'know what? Lee Harvey Oswald never stood a chance."

She sums up the juxtaposition of those two television roles. "I had to wear girdles and stockings for one and the baggiest blue jeans for the other. In *Transparent* I am either naked or in a dressing gown but for *11.22.63* I had two bags of rice in my bra to make my boobs look all hangy." She laughs her Southern laugh again.

Jones, whose relationship and

CHERRY
JONES TELLS
DIVA ABOUT
HER "DUDE
DYKE" ROLE IN
TRANSPARENT
AND
MARRYING
HER PARTNER
SOPHIE HUBER
IN THE HOUSE
WHERE THEY
FIRST MET

WORDS JACQUIE
LAWRENCE

"The first day of filming *Transparent* I was starstruck. Not by the actors but by their characters"

subsequent amicable break up with Carol actress Sarah Paulson is well-documented, recently married her long-term girlfriend, the acclaimed filmmaker Sophie Huber. The day wasn't without its drama though. Indeed it wouldn't look out of place in an episode of *Transparent*.

"We decided on the Friday and got married on the Sunday, barely enough time to fly my beloved sister in from Tennessee, but she made it just in time.

"We forgot the license so ended up driving back to our house, the one in which we first met whilst I was filming *24*. We were both renting the house but on different floors, and now we live there together when we are in LA.

"We had the officiator and a van full of witnesses with us and we thought, 'Why don't we just get married here?' So we did. We got married under the old lemon tree, where we had first shook hands all those years ago.

"Both Sophie and I have a hard time saying the word 'wife' so I made up a word for us. I just came up with a sequence of letters, which made the word 'hamet'. I said to Sophie, 'You are my hamet,' and she was astonished because in her language (she is Swiss German) it sounds like the word for 'home' and here we were, getting married at our home."

It seems like Cherry Jones has not only found her emotional home, she clearly has found her professional home too, on the set of *Transparent*, with all it entails.

"After playing noble spinsters for the past few years I am so happy to be playing a sexually-active, nearly-60-year-old dude dyke," she says, before she lets out a final blast of that infectious laugh. **D**

Season two of *Transparent* is available now on Amazon Prime Video.



You are the we of me:
Cherry Jones (*right*) with
her “hamet” Sophie Huber



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk

PUTTING THE CHO IN PSYCHO

Bisexual comedian and actor Margaret Cho broke into the world of comedy when she won a comedy contest where the first prize was opening for Jerry Seinfeld. She moved to Los Angeles in the early 1990s and became the most booked act on the comedy circuit and the darling of late night American talk shows. Bob Hope put her on a prime time special and almost overnight she became a national celebrity. Ever since then, Cho has continued to forge her trailblazing comedy path, refusing to be tamed or to “tone down” the content of her shows. Speaking fear-

lessly about race, sexism, homo- and biphobia, drugs, homelessness, her eating disorder and being a rape survivor has grown an even bigger army of fans, which by the way includes Cyndi Lauper, Debbie Harry, the Cliks, Tina Fey and the Dresden Dolls. If she has a display cabinet at home, that’s where you’ll find a bevy of entertainment gongs. A passionate activist for LGBT causes, she has also been honoured by GLAAD, National Lesbian and Gay Task Force and PFLAG for making a difference in promoting equal rights for all. Bow down, bitches.

DIVA: So, your new show includes material on being single. A performer here, Bird La Bird, does an act called “The Society For Cutting Up Couples”, loosely based on Valerie Solanas’ SCUM Manifesto. What’s your take on singlehood and are you currently single? I’m asking for a friend...

MARGARET CHO: Singlehood is great and I think the best way to be in a relationship is to truly know yourself and understand your sexuality outside of the context of relationship. We are all whole and perfect unto ourselves and

don't require anyone to complete us. But I am not currently single – I don't even follow my own advice. Actually, I do, but I am recently partnered. I'm a divorcée and a fiancée.

I'm sorry for the loss of your dear "father and mother in comedy", Robin Williams and Joan Rivers. I can't imagine how painful that must have been for you. I gather you met Joan 25 years ago and she convinced you to do stand-up. What was it like to have a the comedy legend backing you?

I'd been doing comedy before I met her and she loved my work and wanted to present me with an award for my one person show. We met and fell in comedy love. She was my mentor, my friend, my champion, my teacher, my last resort.

Joan was loved by the gays, but the lesbians not so much. She seems to have had a reputation for being a bit nasty about women. What she said to you about your weight didn't sound too nice... What was your experience of her? Was she a woman's woman on the down-low?

Yes, she was a woman's woman to the bone. She gave me such strength and encouragement. She was a feminist and made great strides for women in comedy. And yes, she always chided me for my weight. She said: "If you gain any more fucking weight, I'm gonna fucking die!!!" So, sorry; my bad.

You've been dubbed "the Queen of all Media", having conquered the worlds of film, television, books, music and theatre and notching up three Grammy Awards and a Emmy nomination... but doing all that social media as well as interviews like this, it must be demanding. Do you like being in the public eye?

It's not so hard! I love my job. It's a fantastic life I have made for myself. I'm grateful for everything I get, everything I have. I was a brave little girl to pursue my dreams so early. I'm proud of the little tomboy I was and still am. I am truly blessed. Nobody ever thought I'd amount to anything. I was abused sexually from the age of

five to 12, then I was raped many times as a young woman. Comedy kept me safe and sane. Onstage no one could hurt me because there were witnesses. Show business saved my life.

The Emmy nomination for your pastiche of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il apparently offended a lot of white English people. I loved what you said on the Seth Meyers show about how "England is where they begin their whitening process". Race is obviously the big issue today in the US and also in the UK. There's a lot of racism in the LGBT communities, too. What do you have to say to white cis and trans lesbian and bi folks about racism?

That we are all in this together, and we will figure this all out. It's time.

US TV host Seth Meyers recently asked you about political correctness and whether it's hard to talk about race now in America. You said you're trying to make people laugh, that your show is really about being touched by craziness in the world. How do you challenge racism with humour?

I use my experience as a woman of colour to make my points. I'm the reason political correctness exists as I'm a feminist, I'm queer, I'm a woman of colour, I'm a political progressive, I'm a rape survivor, I'm a former sex worker, I'm an activist. PC culture was invented to protect people like me – but when it's used to silence me, that's racism/sexism/homophobia in action.

Random tattoo question: why and when did you get your tattoos? They're hot. Do any of them signify anything?

No, not individually, but I tattoo my body as a ritual for myself that finally I own my body. I've spent a lifetime giving my body to others – my rapists, my eating disorders caused by being called too fat – finally, my body is MINE and I signify that by tattooing it, adorning it with beautiful art from the best artists in the world. It's my gift to myself.

What kind of feedback do you get from your fans and followers when

BISEXUAL
HEROINE
MARGARET
CHO TALKS
TO ALENA
DIERICKX
ABOUT
HER NEW
SHOW AND
WHY SHE'S
RELEASED A
SONG ABOUT
KILLING HER
RAPIST

"Onstage
no one
could
hurt me
because
there were
witnesses.
Comedy
saved my
life"

you talk about LGBT issues?

All different kinds of things, from joy and excitement to tears about their own coming out stories and gay-bashing and homophobia and being able to rise above the hatred. I'm grateful to have helped and even more grateful that I'm able to hear their words, that they let me into their lives. It's a true honour.

Can you tell us a bit about the charitable work you do for gay rights, anti-bullying campaigns and the homeless community?

Lots of things! Trying to get hate crime laws to include LGBT! Only 16 states include us. It's an outrage. I am an avid supporter of #itgetsbetter. I also do a lot of work with Larkin Street youth center, a homeless shelter for LGBT youth. Charity work is a major focus for me.

What do you like most and least about England?

I love the food. I hate that everyone gets so sunburned so fast! I want to give all of the UK lots of nice sunblock.

What do you say to people who say you've "gone too far" with your forthcoming song about killing your rapist?

It's not about violence. I have come to murder ignorance. Sex abuse becomes self abuse – in my case, addiction/eating disorders/suicide. I encourage survivors to kill the rapist inside you so that you stop killing yourself. Cathartic rage healed me and I want all us who survived to heal.

Female comics are still considered "extreme" or "taboo-busting" just for talking about their bodies and negative experiences with men when in fact it's often the men that have created them, don't you think?

I don't mind being extreme or taboo-busting. I don't mind any of that as long as I can help my sisters go on another day, free from their suffering. ①

Margaret Cho will be bringing The PsyCHO Tour to London's Leicester Square Theatre from 15-20 December. For more information, visit margaretcho.com.




The Picture of Health

Jo Spence (1934-92) understood sexuality as key to our identity and her pioneering photographic practice explored the inequalities between groups of individuals – women and men, homosexuals and heterosexuals. She was interested in documenting how certain types of behaviour and roles are constructed and used to sustain power relationships and critical of the ways in which women are depicted in the media, portrayed merely as objects for the pleasure of heterosexual men. Her collaborative practice with the socialist feminist collective Hackney Flashers in the 1970s addresses inequalities between women and men at home and in the work place, raising issues of disparity of pay and treatment – themes that remain relevant to the present day.

ANNA MCNAY INTRODUCES THE WORK OF THE LATE JO SPENCE

In 1982, Spence was diagnosed with breast cancer and began to use her body autobiographically. Her series *The Picture of Health?* charts her journey through illness and treatment, articulating her feelings of infantilisation at the hands of medical staff.

Crisis Project/Picture of Health? (*Property of Jo Spence?*) (1982) is one of the earliest and most defining images from the project. It pictures Spence naked from the waist up, with the words: "Property of Jo Spence?" inscribed in capital letters on her left breast. The photograph was made shortly before Spence went into hospital to receive treatment. She went on to develop a form of phototherapy as a way of dealing with her depression, following the diagnosis of cancer. 

BP Spotlight: Jo Spence will be on show at Tate Britain until autumn 2016. It includes 19 photographic prints and a selection of archival material recently acquired as part of the gallery's remit to improve the representation of photography as a medium and the work of female artists in particular. With thanks to Elena Crippa, curator, modern and contemporary British art, Tate Britain.

Above: *The Highest Product of Capitalism* (after John Heartfield), 1979

Photograph, tinted gelatin silver print on paper; collaboration with Terry Dennett. Support: 491 x 695 mm on paper, unique. Presented by Tate Patrons 2014. © The Jo Spence Memorial Archive

Opposite *Remodelling Photo History-Colonization 1981-2*

Photograph, tinted gelatin silver print on paper; collaboration with Terry Dennett. Presented by Tate Patrons 2014. © The Jo Spence Memorial Archive





ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk



We are Big Joanie:
(left to right) Chardine,
Kiera and Steph

“PUNK IS DIRECT IN ITS JOY AND PAIN”

With an irresistible sound they describe as “the Ronettes filtered through 80s DIY and riot grrrl with a sprinkling of dashikis,” black feminist punk band Big Joanie are making a big noise on the alternative music scene. DIVA found out more.

DIVA: Hi, Big Joanie! Who are you?

STEPH: I’m Stephanie Phillips and I play guitar and sing.

KIERA: I’m Kiera and I play bass.

CHARDINE: I’m Chardine Taylor-Stone and I play drums.

How did the band get together?

S: We first met in July 2013. I put out a message on Facebook asking if anyone wanted to start a black punk band and Chardine, our drummer, messaged immediately. We found Kiera a few weeks later and started practicing. After we

played our first gig at First Timers we started to get more gig offers and went from there.

As black feminists, what does punk mean to you?

S: For me, my first introduction to feminism and politics was through punk so it means a lot. As black women, by our very nature we are punk as we live in a society that constantly rejects us

and tells us we are lesser. This is why we insisted on defining ourselves as a black feminist punk band. A black woman just going about her day is far more punk than a white middle class guy dressed up in the punk uniform.

K: It's a validating release of pent up emotions we're not "permitted" to show in everyday life as black women because of respectability politics.

What drew you to punk music?

S: My first introduction to punk was through riot grrrl. I loved the politics, the approach and the idea that culture was something I could take part in as well as enjoy.

K: Feeling like an angry and confused tween.

C: I heard Nirvana on a school trip to France, being a black girl in a very white town I was already an outsider so I thought, "Hey, might as well really go for it!" Besides that I just loved the sound and the emotions that it brought up for me. I have very wide music taste these days, from folk, blues, rockabilly, hip-hop to jazz, but I think a core part of me always returns to the punk sound. It's direct in its joy and pain.

Had any of you been in bands before?

S: Yes, I was previously in the London-based feminist punk band My Therapist Says Hot Damn. I didn't choose the name.

C: No, I always wanted to but was too scared! I think there are certain expectations of being a black woman in music, that you have an innate natural ability at it. Feeling that pressure can stop you from trying. In my head I fronted all my favourite bands but I don't think that counts!

There's less of a culture of girls playing guitar/bass/drums than there is for boys – how did you first learn to play your instrument and what inspired you?

C: I already wanted to play drums but as I'm a big fan of simplicity I knew I didn't want to play drums in the "proper way". The first rhythms I learnt were Moe Tucker's in the Velvet Underground, Bo Diddley's and the Jesus and Mary Chain. Really simple but distinctive. Once you start making music, you realise that most of the bands you like had no idea what they were doing! So

once I realised that the pressure was off and I just taught myself.

On your Facebook page you've made statements encouraging white people attending your gigs to be aware of issues like privilege and cultural appropriation (eg wearing dreadlocks or bindis). Is it tiring to have to educate white people about this stuff or do you see Big Joanie as an opportunity to do so?

S: In short, yes, it is tiring. I don't particularly see Big Joanie as a space to educate white people as I believe there are so many other places where they can do that themselves and then come to us. We have to meet in the middle somewhere and it's super tiring to constantly try and coax people to even contemplate learning the basics of cultural appropriation.

K: A bit of both. I definitely don't think it's our job but if we have that platform we can't see things that are deeply offensive to us and not comment on them.

C: The band for me is really about connecting with black alternative people out there, more so than an educational vehicle.

We hear Chardine gave a Ted talk recently, and the band played. Can you tell us more?

S: Chardine gave a great talk about growing up as a black kid in a small town and finding out about alternative music. She spoke about our song Crooked Room, which is based on a quote by Melissa Harris Perry where she compares black women negotiating our racist, sexist, homophobic and patriarchal society and trying to find your vertical in a crooked room. We played that song after the talk and it seemed to go down really well. Hopefully we can do more performances like that in the future.

C: My Ted talk was quite a personal story as I do believe that personal is political. Growing up in a working-class, single-parent family, punk music opened a doorway into another world of art, literature and politics that I would have never had access to. I was not one of those children you see being shuffled from gallery to gallery by well-informed, arty, middle-class parents. I wanted to make a point that there are other ways we can teach ourselves and grow creatively outside

LOOKING FOR
MUSIC THAT
MARRIES
POLITICS WITH
THE BEAT?
MEET BLACK
FEMINIST
PUNK BAND
BIG JOANIE
INTERVIEW
LOUISE CAROLIN

of the establishment and it is just as valid, if not more so.

What is the best thing about being in a black feminist punk band?

S: Knowing that I'm in the band I needed to exist when I was a kid, and hopefully we're helping more young black kids realise there are more ways to express yourself than the limited ways society wants to see you.

K: Having a space of mutual and unspoken understanding and feeling safe to express ourselves however we decide to.

C: It makes a great chat-up line. More seriously, it's where I feel normal for once.

And the worst thing?


S: Some angry white racists found our page recently and started posting on it.

K: People thinking we shouldn't exist.

C: Nothing! We need more!

You're crowdfunding your new single and putting it out on your own label. Have you ever been offered a deal by an established label? Would you take it?

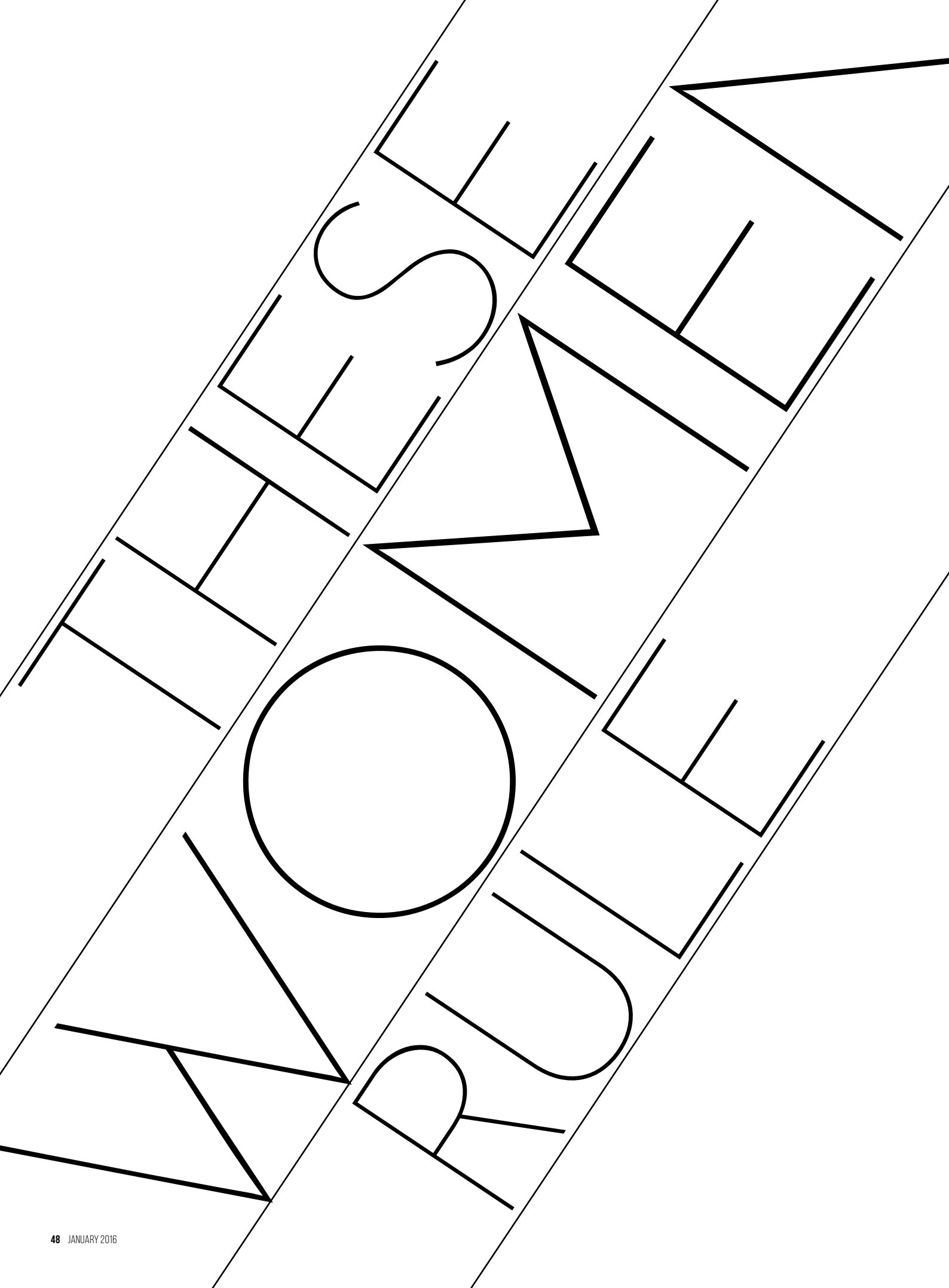
S: We've never been offered a deal by an established label and I can't imagine we would. It would be hard to say whether we would sign to a label but we're obviously open to the idea. Releasing our next single ourselves just made more sense, really. We knew a few people that could help us so we thought it would be quicker to do it this way. The only problem is that it costs a lot to put out vinyl, which is why we have to crowdfund.

C: I think the most interesting stuff is always under the radar, anyway. I don't think any of my favourite bands actually made any money but they were important culturally. The great thing about DIY is that you don't need anyone to tell you are a good enough and hand you over a creative license, you just get on with it. Someone out there will connect with it. 

"As black women, we are by our very nature punk as we live in a society that tells us we are lesser"

Big Joanie's Sistah Punk EP is available to download at bigjoanie.bandcamp.com. Watch out for their next recording in spring 2016.

facebook.com/bigjoanie,
bigjoanie.tumblr.com,
[@Big_Joanie](https://twitter.com/Big_Joanie)





Name: ANGELA EAGLE (UK)
Position: MP for Wallasey, shadow first secretary of state



Name: MARGOT JAMES (UK)
Position: MP for Stourbridge, assistant government whip

Name: MHAIRI BLACK (UK)
Position: MP for Paisley and Renfrewshire South

M

ay's General Election saw more LGBT MPs elected to the House of Commons than ever before, but the world of politics has been slow in enticing LBT women to get involved.

Perhaps it should be no surprise. Women as a whole are still hugely underrepresented in legislatures around the world, and queer women of all shades often face a double discrimination against both gender and sexuality when it comes to standing for public office.

The lack of representation of LBT women of colour is even more noticeable, and something all parties in the UK have failed to improve. There has never been an LBT woman of colour elected to the House of Commons.

Indeed, the perpetually low number of women in parliament in the UK overall has prompted a variety of famous faces, journalists and activists to form the Women's Equality Party. The organisation, whose founders include the recently appointed QI host Sandi Toksvig, aim to shake up the Westminster boys' club, and get women of all hues elected.

The WEP is just one example of why those of us who want a more diverse politics should not despair, but get stuck in. If you're a lady who likes ladies, and also want to get involved in politics, there are plenty of examples around the world who can inspire you to take up your cause.

You could do a lot worse in 2016 than making your New Year's resolution to follow in the path of these amazing women, who have all blazed a trail in their own way.

HOME-GROWN TALENT

Labour's Angela Eagle was the second out lesbian in the House of Commons, after brave forerunner Maureen

AROUND THE WORLD LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANS WOMEN ARE MAKING THEIR PRESENCE FELT ON THE POLITICAL SCENE

WORDS CHARLOTTE HENRY, RACHEL SHELLEY, LOUISE CAROLIN AND JANE CZYZSELSKA

Colquhoun in the 1970s. After serving in a variety of roles, both in government and opposition, she was one of three female MPs to run in the recent four-way election to be deputy leader of the party this summer.

She came third, but has subsequently gained a very significant role in Jeremy Corbyn's regime. Eagle was appointed shadow business secretary, and shadow first secretary of state, effectively making her another deputy to Corbyn alongside elected deputy Tom Watson. She will also fill in at prime minister's questions when the leader is away.

While the appointment of Eagle was thought by some to be an attempt by team Corbyn to cover the lack of women in the top jobs in his team, she has pulled no punches in her new role.

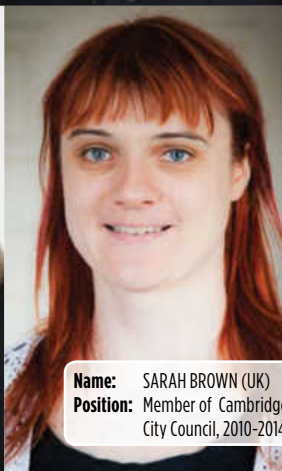
Margot James was the first out gay woman elected to the House of Commons (Eagle came out having already been elected), after a successful business career. She has held growing sway in the Conservative party, ▶



Name: RUTH DAVIDSON (UK)
Position: MSP for Glasgow, leader of the Scottish Conservatives



Name: EMILY BROTHERS (UK)
Position: Stood for election in Sutton and Cheam, 2015



Name: SARAH BROWN (UK)
Position: Member of Cambridge City Council, 2010-2014



Name: BARONESS LIZ BARKER (UK)
Position: Member of the House of Lords

serving in various roles including vice chairman of the party during the 2010 election campaign.

She was bit of a superstar in the equal marriage debate in parliament too, taking on her party's old guard with an impassioned speech, drowning out the heckles from her own colleagues.

There were rather unimpressed grumbles from some corners of Westminster when the loyal and talented James did not make it to the high-profile ministerial ranks; she is an assistant government whip, a relatively low rung on the ladder. Expect her to have climbed up by 2020.

Ruth Davidson has the unenviable task of trying to convince Scotland to vote Conservative. The Tory leader north of the border is something of a rising star in her party, and has used her increasing profile to try and normalise having gay women in prominent political positions. She's appeared in political broadcasts and pictures with her partner, played a huge part in the successful No

campaign in the Scottish independence referendum, and helped keep her party's sole representative in the House of Commons against a tidal wave of SNP support.

We will be seeing a lot more of Davidson in the lead up to the Scottish Parliament elections in May, and it is strongly rumoured in Westminster that senior Tories are trying to persuade her to stand for the House of Commons in 2020. Watch this space.

Mhairi Black and her colleagues in the Scottish National Party are one of the challenges facing Davidson. She rocketed into the limelight when she dramatically beat Labour's then shadow foreign secretary Douglas Alexander in a traditionally safe Labour seat at the 2015 general election.

Since then, Black has affirmed her superstar status with a barnstorming maiden speech in the House of Commons, and a rabble-rousing address to her party's conference in October. Oh, and she's only 21, and had to finish her degree during the course of the election campaign.

Black is one of seven out SNP MPs, making it the party with the highest proportion of LGBT politicians in the world.

Also in Westminster, albeit unelected in the House of Lords, is Lib Dem Baroness Liz Barker, who came out during the equal marriage debate in the upper chamber, then used her position to campaign on LGBT rights.

Emily Brothers had hoped to be the first transgender MP last May, but she was unsuccessful in her attempts to win Sutton and Cheam for Labour. She took on Rod Liddle when he "jokily" questioned how she knew she was the wrong sex when she is blind, gaining an apology from the columnist. One suspects Brothers will return come 2020.

Sarah Brown was the first transgender politician elected in the UK, when she won a council seat in Cambridge. She was one of many local government victims of the Lib Dem wipeout when she lost the seat in May 2014, although she remains an active campaigner on trans issues, and is a



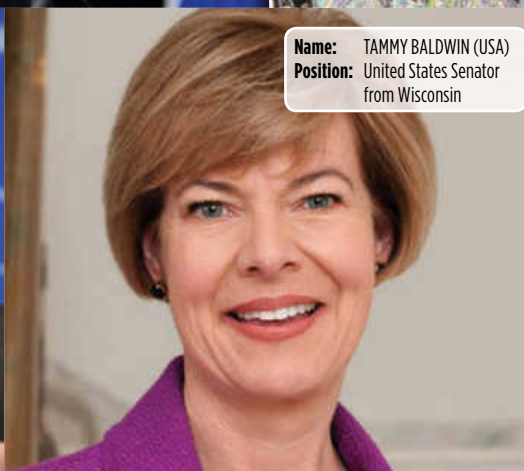
Name: JOHANNA SIGURDARDOTTIR (ICELAND)
Position: Prime minister, 2009-13



Name: ANNA GROZDKA (POLAND)
Position: Member of the Polish parliament, 2011-15



Name: LISSY GRONER (GERMANY)
Position: Member of the European Parliament, 1989-09



Name: TAMMY BALDWIN (USA)
Position: United States Senator from Wisconsin



Name: KYRSTEN SINEMA (USA)
Position: Member of US House of Representatives for Arizona 9th

relationship with two other Lib Dem activist women.

NEAR NEIGHBOURS

Before her retirement from politics, Iceland's Johanna Sigurdardottir was the highest-ranking lesbian politician in the world. She served as her country's prime minister from 2009 until 2013, making her the world's first openly gay head of a government. She had been an elected parliamentarian since 1978, and served as social affairs minister before getting the top job.

Sigurdardottir legalised same-sex marriage in Iceland during her time in office, then used the law she had brought in to marry her long-term partner. Not surprisingly, some parts of the world found it hard to adapt to a lady PM accompanied by a First Lady. Chinese state media infamously removed Sigurdardottir's partner, Jonina Leosdottir, from pictures of a visit the pair made to the country.

Anna Grodzka, from Poland, became Europe's first openly transgender MP when she was elected to the

Polish parliament in 2011, a hugely brave move in that deeply Catholic country. In February 2012, when former Polish president Lech Walesa said he believed that "gay people belong on the back benches of parliament... or even 'behind the wall,'" Grodzka defiantly joined a gay colleague on the front benches at the next opportunity they had.

Germany's Lissy Groner served as member of the European parliament between 1989-2009. Like many others mentioned here, she has used her position to pursue an agenda of women's rights and LGBT equality.

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

Tammy Baldwin is the only gay woman in the American senate, representing Wisconsin since 2012. Indeed, rather depressingly, the Democrat politician was the first openly gay senator ever. Coincidentally, her state was the first to enact gay civil rights law, back in 1982.

Baldwin is defiantly private, and her Democratic colleague Al Franken

has reportedly described her as the "the most serene member" of Congress.

She has, though, fought for LGBT equality throughout her career, and is currently pushing for reviews for those discharged from the US army for being gay. Baldwin is also out campaigning for Hillary Clinton in the presidential race. As the first gay senator trying to get the first female president to the White House she's an agenda-setter indeed.

Baldwin was joined on Capitol Hill in 2012 by Kyrsten Sinema, who represents part of Arizona in the lower chamber, the House of Representatives. The former social worker spoke openly about her bisexuality when elected to the Arizona legislature, coming out to reporters with the phrase, "Duh, I'm bisexual". Yeah... duh. That should give you a sense of her no-messing attitude.

Fitness enthusiast Sinema had a conservative, Mormon upbringing, and her out and proud approach to her sexuality is thought to have



Name: KATE BROWN (USA)
Position: State Governor, Oregon



Name: E DENISE SIMMONS (USA)
Position: Mayor of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008-09

contributed to neither of her parents attending her swearing-in when she made it to Washington.

The first openly bisexual state governor in US history, Oregon's Kate Brown was sworn in last February after her predecessor John Kitzhaber resigned over a corruption scandal. She has declared she will run for the governorship as a Democratic candidate in a special election to determine who will see out Kitzhaber's term, in November 2016.

A popular local politician, Brown has worked in Oregon state politics for more than 20 years. Outed as bisexual in the early 90s by a newspaper, she played a key role in getting the state's same-sex partnership laws passed in 2007 and was elected Secretary of State in 2008.

The first openly lesbian African-American mayor in the United States, E Denise Simmons, was elected to office in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 2008. Operating a "mayor's parlour" for the people of Cambridge, the indefatigable Simmons addressed

issues from the environment to co-ordination of the city's various social services. Praised for her thoughtful and diligent work both in public and behind the scenes, she has also led public discussions on how race and class affect the city. Simmons won re-election to her seventh term as councillor in November 2013, and began serving on 6 January 2014.

Over in Canada, Kathleen Wynne is not only the first female Premier of Ontario, she's the first openly gay head of government in Canada and in the English-speaking world.

Having taken office in 2013 for the Liberal party, Wynne is known for her dedication to youth and education. Raised in Toronto, Wynne was married with three children. But in 1991, her estranged husband moved into the basement of the family home, and Wynne's new partner, previously a friend for 18 years, moved in. When it became legal, Wynne married Jane Routhwaite in 2005. Together they form a Canadian political powerhouse.

AUSTRALIA

Penny Wong was the first lesbian elected to Australia's senate. Coming from an Asian background, she is also, notably, one of only a few lesbian politicians in the world to come from an ethnic minority too.

Wong's political relationship with marriage equality is a complex one. Although clearly personally an advocate, she stuck to the Labor party's line when its policy was not in favour, whilst working to change it internally. It all came to a climax at an emotional party conference, where Wong received standing ovation so powerful it moved her to tears.

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

With its deep-rooted Catholicism and macho culture, South America is not exactly bursting at the seams with LBT women deciding to become politicians. Which makes those that have stepped forward all the braver...

In Venezuela, Tamara Adrian stood for election to Congress, becoming the first transgender politician to run



Name: KATHLEEN WYNNE (CANADA)
Position: Premier of Ontario, Canada



Name: TAMARA ADRIAN (VENEZUELA)
Position: Stood for election to the Venezuelan Congress, 2015



Name: PENNY WONG (AUSTRALIA)
Position: Leader of the Opposition in the Australian Senate

in a popular election in the country. "We're going to fight so that everyone gets respect," she said as she went to register her candidacy in August 2015.

Adrian has built on her training as a lawyer to draft a gender identity law, a civil partnership law, a non-discrimination law and a civil registry law to go forward for discussion in the Venezuelan parliament. She is also chair of the IHAHO committee.

In 1997, Patria Jimenez became the first lesbian member of Mexico's parliament, and indeed the first gay member of any legislature in Latin America; a groundbreaking moment.

As a young woman she reportedly had to leave home to avoid being sent to a psychiatrist for therapy to "cure" her gayness. Openly gay during her election campaign, she has continued to promote LGBT rights and women's rights, shifting the dial in a country where those things do not come easily.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

These women, in their various ways,

decided they were going to change the world, or at least their corner of it. Whether it is Angela Eagle changing perceptions of northern Labour, Margot James taking on the Tory boys or Patria Jimenez trying to change a continent, every single one of the above broke new ground.

New political movements like the Women's Equality Party are also looking to push forward equality and representation for all women.

It is noticeable though that many of those mentioned, with the exception of James and Ruth Davidson, come from centre-left or even socialist-facing parties. Those groups have always traditionally been better at picking up equality issues, and are slowly reaping the rewards of attracting a diverse base of activists, parliamentarians and grassroots support. It is something the right would do well to adopt.

There is also a steeliness and a toughness to many of the women profiled. They have all had battles to overcome to get to their positions,

which appears to have given them an inner strength and resolve.

Kathleen Wynne told DIVA: "My hope is that when young people think about what it means to have our first woman premier or our first lesbian premier, they are not thinking about the barriers I must have faced because of my gender or sexual orientation. I want them to think about their limitless possibilities in life. I want young people to see the first lesbian premier as a reflection of the society we are building for them – a world where no one is going to stand in the way of your dreams on the grounds that you are a woman, or LGBTQ, or aboriginal, or disabled, or an immigrant or any of the things that make us who we are."

Let's hope that these lesbian, trans and bi women, including Wynne, have shattered the glass ceiling so significantly that other LBT women soon follow into parliaments around the world.

So, what do you want to do in 2016? **D**

"IT WAS AN
AMAZING
FEELING
TO PLAY A
LESBIAN"



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk

Ellen Page had a vested interest in working on her latest project, *Freeheld*. Based on the true story of New Jersey police detective Laurel Hester (played by Julianne Moore), the film explores how after being diagnosed with terminal lung cancer Hester fought to change county policy so that her pension benefits would eventually go to her same-sex partner, Stacie Andree (Page).

When Page first committed to the film, she had yet to come out publicly. But having announced that she was gay last February in a spirited address delivered at the Human Rights Campaign event in Las Vegas, the Canadian actress lifted an enormous weight from her shoulders and has since become a proud champion of LGBT rights. *Freeheld* marks both a personal and professional turning point for Page who knew that being part of the film meant that she could no longer remain in the closet.

HOLLYWOOD
STAR ELLEN
PAGE ON
PLAYING GAY
AND HOW
HER ROLE IN
FREEHELD
HELPED HER
TO COME OUT

PHOTO VICTORIA WILL





Julianne Moore (*far right*) and Ellen Page play partners forced to fight for their rights in *Freeheld*



PHOTO RICHARD SHOTWELL

“When I finally came out, all the dark clouds went away – instantly”

“I’m so much happier having fully come out and navigated this kind of internal journey,” Page says. “I knew that if I committed to playing Stacie and also producing [the film] that there was no way that I could do it and not be out. I wish I had come out sooner because it’s meant that I no longer had to live with all the sadness and fear that I had been dealing with for so long. When I finally [came out], all the dark clouds went away – instantly.”

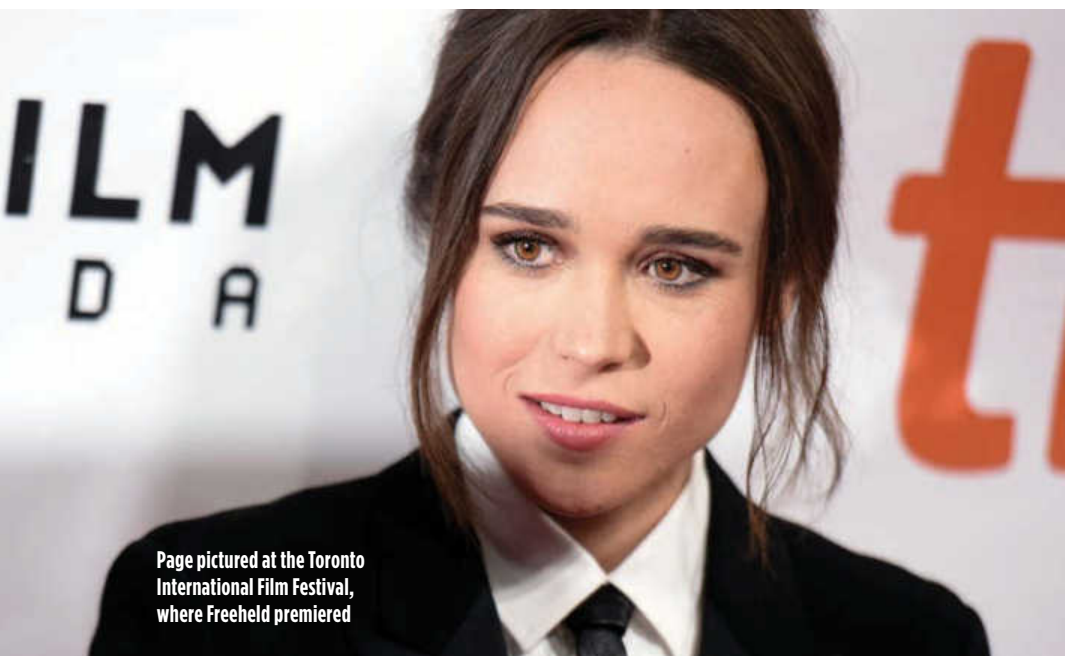
As a measure of her new-found gay pride, Page walked the red carpet in the company of her partner, Samantha Thomas, at the film’s world premiere at the recent Toronto International Film Festival. The event was the couple’s first public appearance and crowds enthusiastically cheered and waved at Page who felt “uplifted and thrilled by the warmth and spirit of acceptance” from the Toronto onlookers.

Page had been interested in turning *Freeheld* into a feature film for seven years, ever since she saw the eponymous Oscar-winning documentary. She was “overjoyed” when Julianne Moore agreed to play Hester alongside a solid supporting cast that includes Steve Carell as local gay activist Steven Goldstein and Michael Shannon as Dane Wells, Hester’s straight male partner on the police force. Shannon plays a prominent role in the film as the fellow detective who helps argue Hester’s case in defiance of local authorities who initially rejected her pension rights application as threatening “the sanctity of marriage”.

For our chat, Page was wearing a blue sweater, red shirt, and black trousers. She looks younger than her 28 years, and has a fresh-faced enthusiasm that is infectious and has her always on the verge of breaking into a broad smile. Some of her past film credits include *The East*, *To Rome With Love*, *Inception*, *X-Men* and *Juno*, the 2007 film which earned her a best actress Oscar nomination.

Ellen, how big a difference has coming out made in your life and work?

It felt very suffocating to keep my authentic self hidden. It meant that I was forced to lie, not directly, but indirectly, by omission almost every time I discussed my life. It robbed me of my inspiration and love of film, and you feel trapped in the way you presented yourself in public. Now I feel that I’ve



Page pictured at the Toronto International Film Festival, where *Freeheld* premiered

regained my enthusiasm for work and everything else in life. It's honestly so liberating to be able to be true to who I am and not feel like I have to hide anymore.

What made your work in *Freeheld* so important to you?

I wanted to be able to show what it means to be in a closeted relationship and how the love you feel for another person is often compromised and debased because of repressive attitudes and prejudice in society. I know how, as a gay person and having been in several closeted relationships, how terrible and painful it is to live under those restrictions and with the sense of fear or shame that comes from that.

Was it also important that your film was based on an actual case where a gay couple is fighting for equal rights under the law?

It makes it more tangible. Our film shows the practical consequences that flow from the lack of equality that the LGBT community suffers from and how society needs to address those issues. It was very meaningful for me to be able to show how two women were forced to become activists simply because they wanted to enjoy the same basic rights that are granted to heterosexual couples.

There was also an element of art imitating life in that wanting to do this film inspired you to come out?

"It was incredibly satisfying to finally do a love scene with another woman"

I had been debating the issue for a long time and the film was really what finally pushed me to that point. It would have been morally and psychologically impossible for me to have remained closeted while making and then promoting this film, when you're telling the story of two very brave gay women who were fighting for their rights in the middle of dealing with the terrible tragedy that they were facing as Laurel's health began to decline. Their struggle inspired me to do what I needed to do.

Did you feel a sense of outrage over Hester's battle to be able to transfer her pension rights to her partner, Stacie Andree?

Yes. I also felt angry at how unnecessary and stupid it was. When you look at how Laurel Hester devoted her career to the police department and protecting the citizens of New Jersey, you wonder how she could be denied the right for her pension to go to her domestic partner, the same way it would go in the case of a heterosexual couple.

Can you imagine how horrible Hester must have felt when she was very ill and close to dying and asking to have her pension transferred to Stacie and these people on the board [the Republican Party-dominated "freeholders" overlooking pension issues] were looking her in the eyes and telling her "No" simply because she and Stacie were a same-sex couple?

What was it like working with Julianne Moore?

It was one of the best moments of my career. She's so good at what she does and she works as hard as anyone to get her character right and make your scenes together work as well as possible. Julianne has also played probably more gay women than anyone else and it was great to have her do the film. (Laughs) I couldn't imagine anything or anyone better to play in a love story like this.

Did you feel any different while shooting the film and knowing that now everyone was aware that you were a gay person playing a gay character?

It was an amazing feeling to play a lesbian. I experienced this beautiful kind of realization that I was playing a gay woman who was such an inspiration to me. I had not felt such a sense of calm and sense of self-fulfilment since I was a teenager and starting out as an actor.

It kind of surprised me how exhilarating it felt since I had spent such a long time thinking and dreaming about getting that opportunity. It was also an incredibly satisfying thing to finally do a love scene with another woman after being so closeted for so long.

What kept you from coming out earlier?

I was worried about the impact on my career even though I don't think many people in the industry were surprised when I came out. I had been as out as you possibly can without announcing it and it would always come as a surprise to me if someone would meet me and wouldn't be aware that I'm gay.

Things had accumulated to a point over the last several years where making this film convinced me that I should stop being afraid and just do it because I needed to get on with my life and live it as openly and as freely as possible. It was such a wonderful feeling to finally reach that moment where I was ready to do something which I thought was impossible earlier in my career.

Would you like to keep finding more gay roles in films?

It would be such a thrill if I could play gay characters for the rest of my career. I can't tell you how happy that would make me! ☺

Freeheld is in cinemas from 19 February 2016.



So

Sexy

it

hurts

Ask some lesbians what they think about bisexuals and you might get this kind of answer: "They can't be trusted, they sleep around, they are just 'curious'." These are examples of biphobia, and sadly they mean that some bi women feel they can't be open about their attraction to people of different genders, in case gay women don't want to know them.

But, where do these ideas come from? In my recent research, I found some answers in surprising places. I found that a lot of prejudice towards bisexuals is rooted in their "hypersexualisation" – the idea that bisexuals are sexually adventurous and promiscuous and that this is the most important thing about them. In other words, we are not neighbours, mothers, workers, taxpayers, friends. No, we are all rampantly having sex.

Some bisexual women out there might be thinking, "Chance would be a fine thing". Indeed, like some lesbians and straight women, some bi women do like to have frequent, varied sex. But other bisexual women are celibate, and many are in monogamous relationships. Many are just struggling to get by – the rates of mental distress are even higher among bi women than lesbians, and we often find it harder to be out in the workplace due to pernicious stereotypes.

My research contributors (all of whom were bisexual or queer), didn't like the hypersexualisation and pornification of bisexuality. For example, Kate told me that, "Framing something as titillating causes a problem because it seems like it gets framed solely as that, and nothing goes beyond that". When asked, "What do you think about the commodification of bisexuality?" the answers mostly ranged from "not great" to "it makes me sick". "Commodification" is used here to describe how something (an identity, actions or culture) is made into a sellable product, or something to sell product.

But, the sex industries love a bit of girl-on-girl action. My research contributor Lena, who is a bisexual woman, explains here:

Lena: This commodified bisexuality has been in porn for heterosexual men for a long long time but it's got to the point where it's actually compulsory.

PORTRAYALS
OF BI
WOMEN AS
HYPERSEXUAL
FEED
PREJUDICE,
SAYS SURYA
MONRO

"Recently
research
group Bi UK
was asked
to provide
a 'hot bi
babe' for
a photo
shoot"

Interviewer: It's a mainstay of mainstream porn?

Lena: Yes... the men are threatened [by] the sight of other men, so [they want] to have men out of the picture.

Interviewer: So they don't want to have just one woman there being on show, they want some sort of interaction?

Lena: But they don't want to see a hairy man, yes! (Both laugh)

My research contributors explained that the sex industries have co-opted sex between women and turned it into something that will make lots of money for them. Heterosexism, sexism and consumerism all combine to support this dynamic. Yaz explains:

Yaz: I think [female] bisexuality can be encouraged within mainstream male thinking because it's considered sexual, it's considered amorous, it's considered quite sort of exotic. In terms of a male porno fantasy. So if a woman tells a straight man that she's a lesbian, there will be a different reaction to if she tells a straight man that she's bisexual.

Interviewer: Just to check what you mean, with a lesbian that would [mean she'd] be unavailable to that man, whereas a bisexual woman might be available and/or be sexually titillating?

Yaz: Exactly. That is exactly what I mean.

Interviewer: So am I right in thinking that that kind of bisexuality is not challenging to men's sense of their sexuality?

Yaz: Yes, that's right, and it doesn't affect their male superiority in any way...

Why should bisexual women and lesbians care about this dynamic? Images of both lesbian and bi women are being misused in mainstream porn. And, as Nancy said, "It perpetuates harmful stereotypes of bi people as being (for example) universally sexually available and inconsistent".

As if this wasn't bad enough, much of the internet has been colonised by porn and dating sites that use the term "bisexual" to mean "swinger, non-monogamous, or promiscuous". Perhaps we need another term that bi-curious and swinging women on dating sites can use – after all, their sexualities are a valid choice, but they don't reflect

the sexual identities of many people who live as bisexual every day.

The commodified hypersexualisation of bisexuality is also present within the mainstream media. "Performative bisexuality" (where bisexuality is "done" to please an audience) is on the increase in TV shows and pop videos, where bi women tend to be portrayed as "sexy", rather than as human beings who might sometimes enjoy sex. Some girls and women enjoy this, but many do not. Meg John Barker, who contributed to my research, told me: "Just recently Bi UK [a research and activist organisation supporting the rights of bisexuals] got asked to provide a 'hot bi babe' to be photographed... It doesn't help matters that it's associated with a certain type of, women particularly, the stereotype, bi-curious, just titillating men."

Now, some of you may work in the sex industries, or enjoy porn. You may create your own, like Anne, who told me, "I have a very active pornographic mind, thank you very much". The issues are to do with context, choice, and meaning. As Rosie said, "It's about who is making it for who, what's the audience, what's the production like, who is it being created by... I have seen some really good lesbian porn made by lesbians for lesbians and it's very very different to heterosexual porn or even so-called 'lesbian porn' made by male directors using crackheads, which is the abuse of humans".

Likewise, a few of my contributors welcomed media coverage of bisexuality even when it is hypersexualised, because it raises awareness that bisexuals exist.

But what we really need is more balanced coverage of lots of different bisexual women's lives in the media. And we need lesbians, bisexuals and straight women to challenge hypersexualised ideas of bisexuality, wherever these are found. **©**

Surya Monro's new book, *Bisexuality: Identities, Politics, And Theories*, is published by Palgrave MacMillan. The book launch is at the LGBT Foundation in Manchester at 7.30pm on 29 January 2016. To book a place, please email a.holmes@hud.ac.uk.

Surya would like to thank her research contributors and others who helped with the book.

Riots not diets! Charlotte Cooper (below) takes to the streets

EAT POWER

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Fat Underground

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62 JANUARY 2016

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FAT POWER

FAT ACTIVISM SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO ANYONE WHO CARES ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE, SAYS CHARLOTTE COOPER

have a new book out, it's called *Fat Activism: A Radical Social Movement*, published in the UK by HammerOn Press. There is a lot that has been written or said about obesity, a term I use to describe the idea that fat is a disease that needs to be cured, but that's not what this book is about at all. Instead I have written about how doing fat activism can change the world.

In recent years there has been an explosion of fatshion (fat + fashion) and body positivity, mostly online. But one of the things I discovered whilst researching this book is that most fat activists are historically isolated from each other and newbies usually think that they're the first to do fat activism. Yet the movement has been going for at least 40 years and, I argue, has strong roots in radical lesbian feminism; indeed, queers remain at its cutting edge today. In fact, fatshion and body positivity is the tiniest tip of the iceberg, fat activism is actually a social movement with enormous breadth and potential that should be of interest to anybody concerned with social change.

Fat Activism: A Radical Social Movement is the product of seven years of painstaking work and I began the project with a great curiosity about where fat activism came from, who started it and why these people whose ideas have been so powerful to me are incredibly obscure. To find out about fat activist histories I did three things. Firstly, I looked back over my own life as a fat activist and tried to piece things together. Secondly, I asked people in my social networks to remember how they were introduced to fat activism and I developed a project called *A Queer and Trans Fat Activist Timeline* to prompt this memory work (details are on charlottecooper.net). Thirdly, I spent a lot of time in archives, travelling through heatwaves and ice storms in three continents to blow the dust off long-forgotten folders and boxes. My idea of fun! These activities became intermingled when, on occasion, I would find forgotten archival donations I myself had made years before.

At the GLBT Historical Society archive in San Francisco I had the pleasure of handling disco diva Sylvester's

sequined stage outfits as well as delving through Judy Freespirit's notebooks, diaries and ephemera. Freespirit, who died in 2010, was a founding member of The Fat Underground, a feminist collective who developed an analysis of fat oppression in 1973 that remains prescient, and who pioneered direct action in fat activism.

Freespirit would make a great biographical subject in her own right. Her activism originated in the Civil Rights Movement and was honed through lesbian feminism. As a fat woman she was a prolific writer and speaker, poet and playwright. Her work was directed towards the people around her, she used art to build community. Amongst her belongings I found flyers for readings with Judith Stein, a Jewish lesbian feminist who lived in Boston and who introduced many more women to fat feminism through her work on *Our Bodies Ourselves*, the classic text on women's health. The author and poet Elana Dykewomon is also a contemporary of Freespirit and is mentioned at length in her diaries. Dykewomon frequently writes about fat herself ►

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and went on to support fat feminism for many years as editor of the lesbian journal *Sinister Wisdom*.

Largesse was another important archival repository for fat activism. Originally online but now defunct, you can access it through archive.org. Karen Stimson, who lives in New England, maintained this indispensable collection of early fat feminist documentation, including scans of original *Fat Underground* publications and her own memoir of fat activism in the 1970s and early 1980s. It was here that I read letters and commentary by Aldebaran, also known as Vivian F Mayer and Sara Golda Bracha Fishman. I was moved by her accounts, which detail the struggle of being ahead of your time, of trying to develop and popularise radical ideas and of being hungry for social change. If anyone is a hero to me, it is Aldebaran.

Two other online archives introduced me to the fantastic work of Heather Smith and Barbara Burford, who published detailed accounts of fat feminism in *Spare Rib* and *Trouble and Strife* in the 1980s. Most of the meagre literature of fat activism looks towards the US, but these were British feminists (Burford was black British) developing an understanding of fat that moved beyond the idea that all fat people have eating disorders, or that fat activism is the domain of white people. Smith's report on the Fat Woman's Conference, which took place in London in 1989 is one of my favourite pieces of fat feminist writing, her politics are so tight!

The *Spare Rib* classifieds of that time are another fascinating record of women's attempts to develop fat activism in the UK, of groups that were established and then dissolved. By the way, my secret hope is that one day a sugar mummy will bankroll a similar online archive of all the back issues of *FaT GiRL* and *Size Queen*, two foundational fat queer zines that were published in the 1990s. Full disclosure: it's where yours truly got her first

publishing breaks.

I have been lucky enough to have met some of these women, and although I often feel isolated as a fat activist, my encounters with their work is what sustains me and helps me feel connected to something bigger. It is incredible to me that people separated by many years and miles could feel kinship. It's even more mind-blowing when you think about the fragility of memory and of the ephemeral objects that constitute an archive, particularly within an institutional funding climate that does not usually value queer voices, fat or otherwise.

In many ways the fat feminist lesbian, bi and queer activists I have mentioned here are the superstars. Even though they are not at all household names, and they should be, they at least have a small chance of being remembered. This is mainly because they published or archived their work in places where it could be found by someone like me who knew where to look. But, like everyone, I am limited by my own autobiography and I have not always been successful in knowing where to look. More people need to do this looking if a fuller picture of fat activism is to emerge; it is more work than one person can do.

Following this, there is so much that is left out when people try to write about fat activism and the absences are huge. To say that my book is a rare instance of writing about fat being produced by a real live fat person will give you some idea of what is missing. If you want to find collections of knowledge, libraries and archival holdings about fat activism by fat people of colour, or fat disabled people, or fat working class people, or fat people who do not live in or orientate themselves to the US, or any permutation of fat lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer people, then you will probably have to construct them yourself, hopefully in conjunction with other people and, ideally, amongst a network of similar accounts.

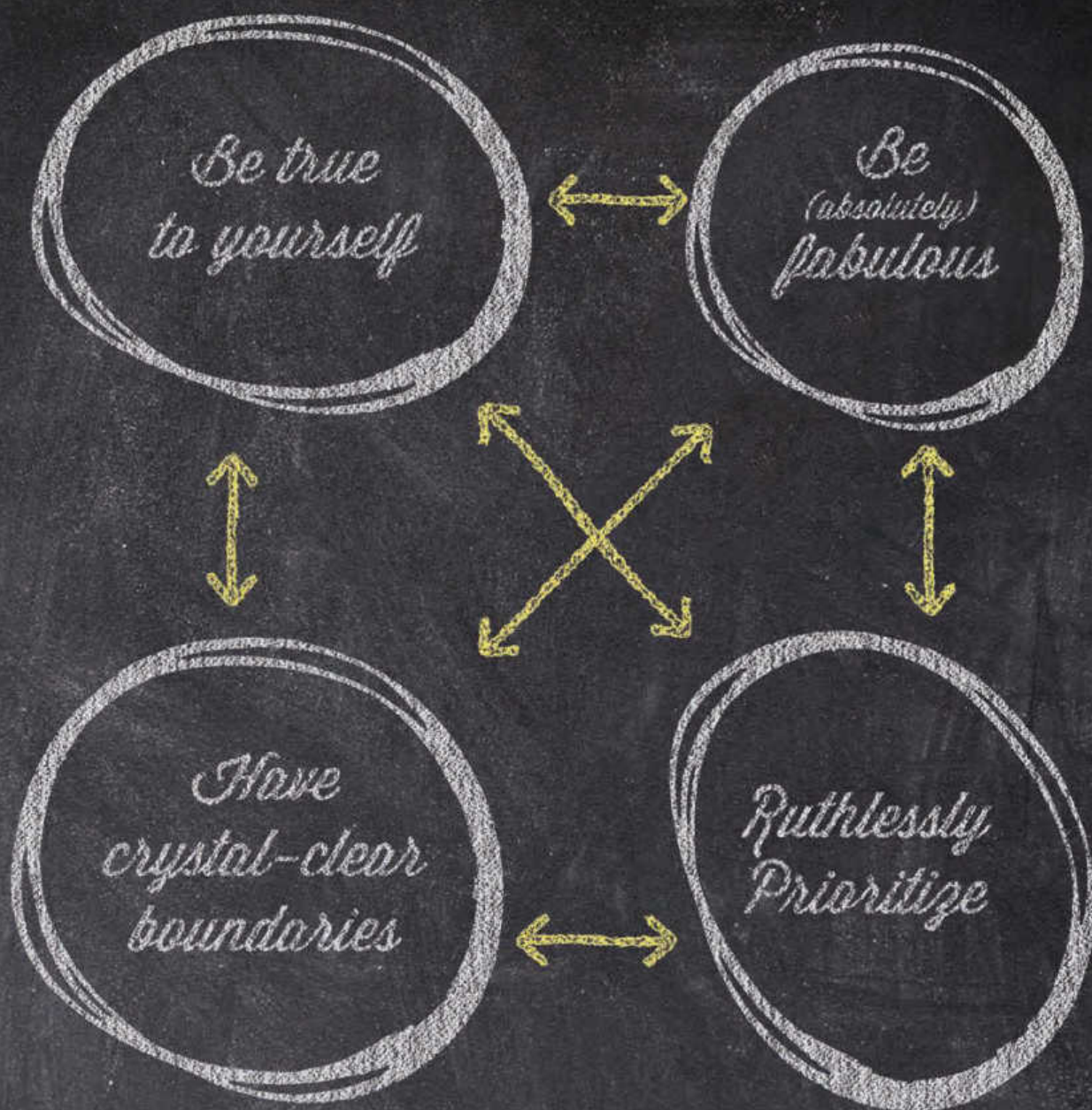
Doing this involves becoming aware

of a politics of erasure that raises uncomfortable questions, for example: how come there is a plethora of young black fat fashion bloggers now, but very little archival evidence of black lesbians in the fat feminist scene of the 1970s that probably spawned them, even though that scene emerged from civil rights activism? How come most people don't know that lesbians pretty much started this whole thing? How come fat gets written out of disability activism and disability gets written out of fat activism, even though there is a lot of common ground between them? What happens to the voices of working class and poor fat activists if fat activism is assumed to be all about the consumerism of fashion?

Creating bodies of work will inevitably involve encounters with power, visibility and accountability and it's easy to feel overwhelmed by this but small acts can go a long way. In *Fat Activism: A Radical Social Movement* I explain that activism is not just something that happens on the streets with shouting and placards, or through letter-writing campaigns. It occurs in everyday moments such as conversations and in small acts like reading or sharing something online. Creating more inclusive histories of fat activism, or understanding the diversity of the movement, can happen through talking to people, learning how to do oral histories, visiting an archive, searching for information, drawing on your political experience and imagination, or even just citing each other's work in order to create a network of knowledge. It is one of my greatest hopes that my book encourages people to build on what I have found, to create many genealogies of fat queer feminist activism, to engage with ideas that I have found life-saving and beautiful. **D**

Fat Activism: A Radical Social Movement is out on 4 January, priced £16. hammeronpress.net

How come most people don't know that lesbians pretty much started fat activism?



Find your
Balance

I used to work in a gym. Whilst telling what I thought was a hilarious anecdote to the team, I absent-mindedly took out my Lypsyl (this was before the days of small pots of Vaseline, when everyone used lipstick-type products). I was nearly at the punch line. I could tell the group were enthralled, yet distracted by me fiddling with my Lypsyl, and bringing it closer to my lips ready to apply once I had delivered my "oh so amusing" punch line. I got to the end of the story but didn't get the rapturous laughter I was expecting. Instead the team seemed uncomfortable. At this point I realised the "Lypsyl" I was about to apply was in fact a Lillet. Awkward.

Life doesn't always go as we planned. But we have many opportunities to reshape how we come across (fortunately I'm no longer known as "Lillet girl") and the direction our lives take.

I'm not saying change is easy, it's hard. How many times have we made New Year's resolutions, been enthusiastic for about four hours on 1 January – between getting up and lunchtime – then decided that on reflection (seeing as it's a bank holiday) we should sack it off, open a bottle of wine, have an enormous roast lunch, and laze around all afternoon watching *Orange Is The New Black* in our pants?

Or is that just me?

But, this year can be different. No really, it can. I have just the thing – Work-Life Symbiosis. In my opinion it's what we need. Not balance, not integration, but symbiosis. And the good news is there are four simple steps to achieve it.

Work-Life Symbiosis is about getting more energy from work than you put in, and investing that excess energy into everything else in your life. It's about getting more energy from everything else in life than you put in, and investing that back into work. It's a positive cycle between home and work, meaning you get more out of each because of the other.

There are four components. Each is important individually, but the real magic is in how they connect.

1. BE TRUE TO YOURSELF

If you do nothing else, do this. It is having absolute clarity about what's really important to you. Then keeping

it front of mind. It's easy to get caught up on the treadmill of life, but forget why you're running in the first place.

Take time to reconnect with what matters most. Is it your partner, family, friends, career, community, making a positive difference? Think about your values. List everything you really care about doing, being, experiencing or having in life. Then force yourself to make priority choices – what is most important? Remember, you only live once, so make your choices count. There are no "right" answers, only answers that are "right for you".

Once you've picked the four or five most important things, commit them to paper. Write them down, use photos or draw pictures – whatever works to give you a visual representation. Then put it somewhere you'll see it to remind you. Otherwise, next week, you'll be back on the treadmill of life, trying to remember why you're running.

2. BE (ABSOLUTELY) FABULOUS

It's easy to get ground down, especially if we're unhappy with our situation. When we are at our best we achieve more and have greater opportunity. And it's more fun. We need to understand how we can be our best self, all the time. My book covers many factors that influence this: what you can control, diet, exercise, mindfulness. Here I focus on positivity. Is my wine glass half-full or half-empty? I don't care – just fill it up! What I care about is mind-set.

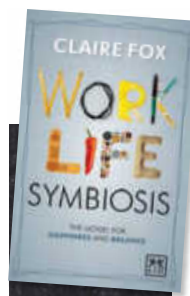
Positivity (or lack thereof) makes a significant difference to being our best selves – and it's a choice. First thing in the morning, decide today will be a "positive" day. Commit that today you won't sweat the small things. Think of the five best aspects of the day ahead. Keep them, and your positivity, in mind throughout the day. Try telling someone what you are doing, so they can hold a mirror up. Then do this the next day too. You will feel the difference and it will help you be your best self.

3. RUTHLESSLY PRIORITISE

Easy to say, hard to do! Whether part-time or full-time everyone has too much to do, and it's hard to say no. We need to be better at making choices. The right choices.

The most straightforward way to prioritise is to ask two questions about

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU?
CLAIRE FOX REVEALS THE FOUR SIMPLE STEPS TO ACHIEVING WORK/LIFE SYMBIOSIS



WORK/LIFE SYMBIOSIS: THE MODEL FOR HAPPINESS AND BALANCE is published by LID Publishing.

Claire Fox is a global HR director at Save The Children International, working part-time, and is on the Timewise Power Part-Time list for 2015. She captained the Great Britain junior slalom canoeing team, is a qualified fitness instructor and has been out since she was 17. Claire and her wife have two sons aged three and five.

what you are doing, in or outside work:

■ Is this task really important? Does it contribute towards what you want to achieve long-term, or does it distract from it? Remember what "really matters" from section one.

■ Does this task need to be done right now? Can it be done later, in a different way, or by someone else?

Use the answers to guide what you focus on. If the answer is "no" to both, consider doing something that matters more instead! Don't get me wrong, there's a time and place for watching films and eating pizza. But do it because you choose, not because you be can't bothered to do anything else.

We get dragged into urgent things. Someone needing help, or a nappy needing changing. But try to focus on things that are important not urgent – they contribute to our ambitions. I'm not saying you shouldn't help people or change a nappy – kindness is important – but ensure you also spend time on things that are important to you long term.

4. HAVE CRYSTAL-CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Know what is and is not ok for you. This will be different from the next person. Communicate it effectively and protect it – no one else will do that for you!

How many evenings are you happy to work late? How about working weekends? How many nightshifts is ok? What about travel? Reflect on what you said was most important in section one then write some statements capturing what you are and are not happy with in terms of boundaries between home and work. Consider how close your current situation is to this, and how you can make shifts to close the gap. This may involve tough conversations – being (absolutely) fabulous gives you greater credibility here but it also may involve getting a new job!

I have given you a whistle-stop tour through my philosophy, and hopefully some food for thought. My book, *Work-Life Symbiosis*, goes into detail with tools and tips, as well as light-hearted anecdotes from my own experiences.

Remember, your life is in your own hands. Make it what you want, because you only live once. **D**

Recent mass murders in Paris, Mali and Beirut are reminders of how conflict is a constant presence. Human beings create conflict all the time, but we are also able to survive it. After the Paris attacks, Pink News reported a story of a gay Muslim who was abused on the gay dating app Grindr and was decried as “an ISIS motherfucker” and told to “go back to Iraq”. The man was actually Lebanese. We know two things about this online abuser: they were gay and ignorant. These bombings illustrate how fragile concepts like “community” really are when conflict arises within and between them.

Lesbian author and activist Sarah Schulman’s forthcoming book, *Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility And The Duty Of Repair*, advocates what she calls a “radical openness” as a means to take back the responsibility of conflict resolution into the community sphere. Radical openness is a way of being that places listening to the struggles of others centre-stage. It’s about checking the facts carefully. It’s also about being self-reflective and taking responsibility for harm or pain that we cause to others. And it’s about not “overstating harm”. Doing so, she argues, is a way of justifying ever increasing state intervention to resolve conflicts.

I found myself being pulled in different directions by her ideas; I love the radical simplicity of reducing state interventions in favour of the community, but what is “community”? At best, this is a temporary or situational arrangement, or even a potentially hostile one for some.

Many of us don’t know our neighbours, particularly in urban places, and LGBT people will often have to deal with phobic conflict simply for existing. It isn’t always violent but can be low-level accumulations of shunning, being stared at or disrespected. In this sense, the idea of community is potentially toxic. At the moment, Muslim LGBT people are at serious risk of harm because of the backlash-

FIGHTING A GOOD FIGHT

AS LESBIANS AND BI WOMEN WE ARE LIKELY TO FACE TIMES OF CONFLICT ON A PERSONAL AS WELL AS A COMMUNITY LEVEL. HOW CAN WE PUT THINGS RIGHT?

WORDS ALENA DIERICKX

related conflict after Paris, and this is in addition to existing intolerance on race and religious grounds. There are groups set up at grassroots level to address issues like violence or anti-social behaviour because they have everything to gain from resolving conflict and state responses have little positive effect. Campaigns such as #BlackLives-Matter exist because people of colour are more at risk from law enforcement than localised criminal activity and have no faith in what police forces can offer in terms of resolution.

In the USA, CUAV (Community United Against Violence) is one example of organised peaceful protest and support for victims of hate crime, and in the UK, GALOP and Broken Rainbow work to eradicate domestic abuse within the LGBT+ community, so there is some, limited, support out there to deal with conflict, but perhaps not enough to convince me of the potential for “community” to replace law enforcement anytime soon.

I asked Sarah about the concept of

community and how she felt it functioned in relation to conflict. She told me: “The group is crucial to de-escalation of conflict, it is the responsibility of the group: whether friends, family or co-religionists, or people from the same nation or HIV status to hold the standard of negotiation, self-criticism, communication, accountability and the accumulation of knowledge.”

As with all groups, though, when it comes to action, accountability or decision-making there will always be issues with representation, leadership and who speaks for who. This makes the seductive and powerful idea of community conflict resolution difficult, mainly because of unresolvable practicalities; look at the Women’s Movement as an example. But it is also because most “communities” are diverse, with intersecting components like class, faith, sexuality, age and so on, and there may be no unity or cohesion that is required for action of any kind. Even within the LGBT+ community conflict is ever present.

Some of the LGBT clients I have worked with as a counsellor are isolated from all sorts of notions of community or belonging, both in terms of where they live and/or the family or cultural norms they grew up in. There can be both divided loyalties that are in opposition to each other, like faith and sexuality, or a complete break with a community they do not feel they belong in, which leads to feelings of loss and isolation. Freedom can exact a high price.

One of my clients, a Muslim, described the impossibility of living out the life they wanted because the internal conflict of wanting to remain within a family that rejected bisexuality, within a broader community that was open to it, was one they felt could not be resolved at that stage in their lives. Perhaps this wasn't a final resolution, it was a considered choice to stand still because becoming an exile was unthinkable. Sometimes belonging and community are in conflict.

Working with clients who have experienced physical and sexual abuse, I have learnt that this can take a lifetime to deal with emotionally. Abusers, whether they are partners or family members, will often deny their actions and behave as victims themselves to avoid acceptance of their darker sides. Communities have often failed abuse survivors and made it harder for them to stop blaming themselves for the abuse. My experiences with abused clients tell me that there is often no resolution directly with an abuser, or communities that unite in disbelief, but there is often ability and willingness to integrate the experiences and with support, survive and rebuild lives.

To be clear, Sarah distinguishes abuse as "power over" and conflict as "power struggle". Sarah argues, "The collapse of conflict and abuse is partly the result of people desperate, yet ineligible, for compassion. This is a non-cyclical reading of a human condition in which people who have suffered in the past or find themselves implicated in situations in which they are afraid to be accountable, fear that – within their group – acknowledging some responsibility will mean being denied their need to be heard and cared

for. So they fall back on the accusation of abuse to guarantee that they will not be questioned in a way that confirms these fears".

The idea of overstating harm is a complex one. It is the basis of Sarah's argument in relation to giving more power to and investment in the state. Because if we do not take responsibility for our own part in what goes on in our community (however we define it), we will always need state interventions, whether they are effective or not.

GALOP's 2013 Hate Report revealed that 9% of reported hate crime was homophobic in 2009; rising to 10% in 2010 and 11% in 2011, and 81% of the total figure was based on race. Also significant in relation to how we LGBT folk relate to the state machine, 57% of LGBT people experiencing hate crime don't report it to the police (according to the British Crime Survey) because one in four of us are dissatisfied with the police response.

Out there in cyberspace, of course, the terrain is a bit different, lawless, some would say. Social media is a common place for abusive behaviour as many lesbian, bi and genderqueer people, like Laurie Penny, know all too well. Regularly threatened with sexual violence just for an opinion that is read as man-critique/hate, non-heterosexual journalists and activists are frequently targets of abuse. Bullies online often overstate harm in order to take a victim position to justify cowardly abuse behind the screen. The UN estimates that 95% of all aggressive and denigrating behaviour in online spaces is aimed at women.

The lesbian activist Audre Lorde once said that "unless one lives and loves in the trenches, it is difficult to remember that the war against dehumanisation is ceaseless". This process of dehumanisation is what we all do to varying degrees when we don't want to see another human as the same as us because of what they have done, or what we think or feel they have done to us, or people we identify with. It's easier to strip away everything that makes them human, than to be open to what they need to say. This is even easier on social media where people

aren't meeting in real life. So, for me, notions of community tend to refer back to the individual person. Individuals need to be self-reflective, self-critical even, if they are to pull off conflict resolution. Resolution requires many skills, including listening, imagination, openness and reflexivity amongst others. I think many of us lack these skills, but I also think they can be learned.

On this subject Sarah Schulman adds: "Individual behaviour is most often rooted in how their groups relate to conflict. If they are in cliques, families or nations that cannot be self-critical and are not oriented towards understanding why conflict emerges, then they will tend to be more punitive. If they are in groups where loyalty is defined by actively helping each other negotiate, be flexible and accrue information, then they will be more likely to repair."

When it comes to our personal relationships and how we manage changes in the way we feel and think with a significant other, we may put off discussions because it doesn't feel like a big deal, it may only be the beginning of doubt, nothing like conflict. Perhaps this is why couples go to relationship therapy only when things are really bad, reducing the potential for repair. Often we inherit ways of being in relationship from our families. Our attachment styles may have been insecure and we didn't learn how to deal with problems. A good couples' therapist should be able to offer an objective reading of the relationship, recognise and support problem behaviour (signposting on where necessary), challenge emotional avoidance and help build better, more empathic and open communication, and work from a strengths-based approach. Without trust and openness and the ability to be responsive in personal relationships, group resolutions that require these qualities too seem unlikely to manifest. ●

"Individual behaviour is most often rooted in how their groups relate to conflict"

Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility And The Duty Of Repair will be published in 2016.

Alena Dierickx can be contacted for counselling services at tinyurl.com/ADcounselling.

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WE LIKE TO GIVE OUR DIGITAL READERS A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA.

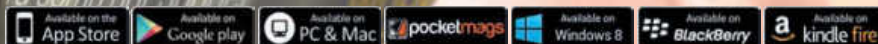
THIS MONTH, ENJOY TRAILERS FOR **JESSICA JONES**, **TRANSPARENT** AND **FREEHELD** AND GET AN INSIGHT INTO LIFE ON THE WAVES WITH **SARAH OUTEN'S AMAZING EXPEDITION VIDEO**.

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Get protected

Few of us would wander down the road shouting out our bank details, or leave notebooks full of passwords lying around, but that is exactly what we do, on a daily basis, albeit digitally.

Online security is not an exciting topic. Bringing it up in conversation usually elicits the same response as a discussion about tax returns, however, it is vitally important. All the more so as technology gets ever more sophisticated. As our phones and laptops get ever fancier, so do the methods people use to gain access to them.

I am conducting a review of my online security this month, and I would gently suggest you do the same. You might be surprised by the details you have in the public domain.

FACEBOOK

I'm putting this first because a large percentage of us live our lives through it. For better or worse, it has become the primary means of communication for many.

When was the last time you checked your Facebook privacy settings? Could you swear that the last post you made was private? Me neither, I think it was, but...

I'm going to come over all paranoid

ONLINE
HYGIENE FOR
A HAPPY,
HEALTHY 2016
WORDS RHODA MEEK

android here, but think about it. If your profile is set to public, and you check into a bar, you are telling the entire world that you are not in the house.

What about your mother's maiden name? Seriously. It's used for all sorts of security purposes. However, if your mother is on Facebook, with her maiden name in brackets, and you have associated her as your mother using Facebook's family feature, there is a very simple way for people to find out something you think is pretty secure.

FIX IT!

At the top right of your Facebook timeline is a padlock with three lines next to it. It has a quick privacy check-up, which is the minimum you should do. Quick Privacy Check

1. Check your default post setting. I set mine to friends. That way, if I want to post publicly, I have to actively change the setting on the post.
2. Apps will accumulate over time. They often contain more data than you think, and Facebook uses that data to target you with advertising. An app cull is time well spent.
3. For me, the third step is most important: your profile data. Double

check that you're not broadcasting your actual birth date to the world. That's another security check places like banks perform.

4. Finally, go to Settings > Privacy and double-check everything. For example, I discovered that my mobile number, which I thought was private, was actually showing publicly. I hang my head in shame.

PHONE

My phone is my life. I bank through my phone. I email, text, Whatsapp, buy from Amazon and check into locations. I have a world of information on it, including apps for Paypal, eBay and more.

Whilst being able to perform tasks on your mobile with as few clicks as possible is fantastically useful, the more auto-saved passwords you have, the easier it is for someone who has got hold of your phone to access your apps. If you can bear it, tell your mobile browser not to save your passwords.

FIX IT!

If you don't have a lock screen, do yourself a favour and get one. Whilst we are on the topic, 1234 is not a secure PIN number. Neither is your birthday, your girlfriend's birthday or your bank PIN number. Make it impossible for your partner to guess, and you might be getting close to a good one.

If you unlock with a password, it should not be the name of your dog. Pick something obscure, include capital letters, numbers and symbols. Add a space if you want. Anything to make it harder to crack.

A pattern is good too, but don't set the phone to show the path. A few unlocks on the bus and the person behind you knows the pattern.

If your phone is stolen, you don't have to lose everything on it. Enable automatic backup options for photos and contacts (Google and Dropbox do this, as does Apple). It is invaluable, and saves a lot of time when changing phone, too.

Try: Where's My Droid (Android) 

Next month: all you need know to ensure complete banking, email and password security.

Do you want to kick-start 2016 with a January detox from drinking? You won't be alone; an LGBT charity is inviting people to join their Sober Start campaign. A bit like Dry January, the post-Christmas and New Year detox, Sober Start differs by encouraging people to think about reducing their alcohol intake not just for a detox month in January, but throughout the year.

The team who dreamed up the campaign are detox heroes Antidote, a specialist LGBT drug and alcohol service run by London Friend. Antidote is inviting people to get sponsored to stay off booze for a month and raise money to help them provide drug and alcohol support to LGBT people seeking to cut down their drug or alcohol use, or stop completely. Aimed at the social drinker and encouraging them to give up alcohol for a month and/or implement sustainable reductions in their alcohol consumption over time, the campaign is not a medical detox programme.

Toni Hogg, Antidote's service manager, told DIVA: "Stopping drinking for a month will bring a lot of quick health benefits. You'll be sleeping better, feel more energised, and may even lose some weight."

She should know. Toni gave up drinking for three years a few years ago and tells DIVA: "It was difficult at first but got easier as time went on. I had to learn how to do some aspects of socialising differently. But I loved waking up without a nasty hangover. I felt like I had a much clearer head all of the time, and felt more present in situations. I realised that I enjoyed myself just as much as when I had been drinking, but I also got home much earlier than I used to as well.

"Before I started my dry period I thought I might not have as much fun, or see my friends less, but actually I found that I could still see them and enjoy my time with them. It didn't actually feel like I was missing out on anything, which I had originally feared I might. I felt great, had more energy and looked better, plus I could remember everything that had happened. The only cons were mainly the pressure from other people wanting me to drink with them when I was out. I had to help my friends to understand why I was doing it so they'd put less pressure on me, but after a while that became much easier for everyone, too.

"Now I do drink occasionally but it's just socially and I feel that after a period of time off it's much easier to control. I've never gone back to how it was previously."

Behind the campaign, the sober facts

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN
ENCOURAGING
LGBT PEOPLE TO
GO ALCOHOL FREE
THIS JANUARY



Sober



Start

“When I gave up drinking I felt great, had more energy and looked better, plus I could remember everything that had happened”

show that LGBT people drink more, and more often, than society as a whole. Research from Stonewall suggests that a third of lesbian and bi women drink three times or more a week, compared to 25% of women in general, while statistics from the LGBT Foundation shows 29% of lesbian and bi women binge drink at least once a week, compared to 15% of women in general. The Trans Mental Health Study 2012 found that 47% of trans people drank at high and potentially problematic levels.

Antidote is encouraging people to not just give up for a month then go back to old habits, but to think about how they can reduce their drinking all year round. Toni says, “It can feel like alcohol is always around us, as so much socialising on the LGBT scene is in bars and clubs. We want people to know how they can cut back a little bit on a night out, help avoid that hangover the next day, and take steps to prevent their drinking becoming a problem later on”.

People who want to pledge to a month off can sign up and ask their friends to sponsor them, and help Antidote continue to provide their support services. London Friend’s chief executive Monty Moncrieff is leading the call. “I’m having a Sober Start for January, and I’ll be asking everyone I know to support me. It’s a great way to have a break and work off the excesses of Christmas whilst raising money for a fantastic cause. Getting sponsored gives you more motivation to keep going for the whole month.”

All the money raised by the campaign will help Monty, Toni and their team provide the Antidote LGBT drug and alcohol service, so even a £10 donation could help them to answer a call about alcohol support. Fifty pounds could subsidise a counselling session for someone on low income and £250 would help them to train and support new volunteers to run Antidote drop-ins and support groups. “We draw on the experiences of our clients to help us raise issues about LGBT equality to public health policy makers, and train other healthcare staff on how they can better support LGBT people, so it will also help people going to other services too,” says Monty.

So what are you waiting for? A Sober Start can help you beat those January blues and be the beginning of lowering drinking all year round. **D**

For more information, including how to sign up to the sponsorship campaign, visit londonfriend.org.uk/soberstart or use the hashtag #SoberStartLGBT.

In 2013 the athlete and adventurer Sarah Outen, now 30, became the first person to row from Japan to Alaska. She rowed 3,750 nautical miles over 150 days in her seven-metre boat Happy Socks to complete the challenge. In November of this year, she completed a gruelling round the world London-to-London expedition, which she began in 2011 and which has seen her kayak, cycle and row over 25,000 miles, kayaking under Tower Bridge to HMS President on 3 November to complete the challenge. Back in 2013, while rowing solo across the Pacific Ocean, Sarah came out by announcing that she was engaged to be married to girlfriend Lucy – we're pretty sure it's the first time any one has popped the question while in a tiny rowing boat, alone in the middle of an ocean! Sarah had never been in a relationship with a woman before Lucy, with whom she was reunited once ashore.

DIVA: First of all, congratulations on completing your latest trip. You went from London, around the Northern hemisphere and back to London again by bike, rowing boat and kayak, breaking world records for parts of it. When did you first get the idea and why did you decide you wanted to do it?

SARAH OUTEN: In 2009 I rowed across the Indian Ocean from Australia to Mauritius, spending four months alone at sea. It was a journey in memory of my father who had died suddenly three years before. The Indian Ocean showed me how to put a big project together and the experience of spending four months alone at sea was life-changing. It altered my perception of what was possible and opened my eyes to the idea of not needing to conform – of being able to forge your own path. I loved being on the water for so long and to be learning about the ocean in that way. I wanted more ocean time and also to experience meeting people and cultures – the idea of London2London was born.

What kind of training did you do to prepare yourself for the expedition?
A lot of mental and physical preparation goes into an expedition like this. One of the hardest things of all was

ATHLETE AND ADVENTURER SARAH OUTEN HAS TRAVELLED OVER 25,000 MILES BUT AS SHE TELLS ALENA DIERICKX, HER EMOTIONAL JOURNEY HAS BEEN JUST AS EPIC

"I started this journey solo, not imagining that I would return home engaged. And to a woman, as well!"

changing from one mode of transport to another. After months of cycling across Europe and Asia, I had to prepare for a 3,000 mile solo ocean row. After that it was months of kayaking before having to relearn how to ride a bike long-distance again. This was hard going on my body. Each discipline demands its own skills and its own areas of strength so the training was an ongoing process – between stages I was having to retrain my body to be able to cope with the different pressures of the stage ahead and rehab it after the pressures of the previous stage. I worked with trainers on very specialised routines that would help get my body into shape as quickly as possible. I also had sports massage and physiotherapy where possible to help those muscles that had been pushed to the limits to recover in time for the next journey.

Each stage also brings its own set of mental challenges, so mentally training for this was very important. And again this was an ongoing process – I work with a psychotherapist to help me work on my coping strategies. I was often completely alone for months at a time and when you're tired, alone and quite often scared, you need coping strategies that will get you through. One of the most powerful strategies I used was to celebrate Good Things About Today – naming two or three things that made me happy about that day. Sometimes it is very basic: I am alive and my boat is ok.

There were times when your team didn't know if you would make it out alive. What has being in extreme conditions and situations taught you?

The risk involved focuses the attention. Being alone, remote and that if you don't make the right decisions – or if nature decides to throw a wobbly – that your health or life are in danger, and therefore so are those of would-be rescuers, means that you don't ever take things for granted. A narrow escape reminds you how lucky you are to be alive. That sort of perspective is really important and valuable in all areas of life – knowing what to focus your energies on and what to ignore as unimportant. Nature is humbling, especially at its rawest and most chal-

lenging. I think it's always good to be humbled.

Tell us about the charities you were raising money for – why did you choose them and how much did you raise for them in total?

My four chosen charities – CoppaFeel!, MNDA, WaterAid and the Jubilee Sailing Trust – are all very close to my heart. CoppaFeel! was set up by my very dear friend Kristin Hallenga after she was diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer at just 23. The goal is to raise awareness of breast cancer amongst young women. Motor neurone disease is still a killer but the MND Association is working so that one day it won't be. With a good friend suffering from the disease, I really wanted to do what I could to support the charity. The Jubilee Sailing Trust gets people out to experience sailing on the ocean, regardless of their ability – my love of the being on the ocean made this a natural choice. Finally WaterAid – quite simply, water is everything, which is why the work that WaterAid does is vital. I have now raised about £50,000 for them and I hope to keep pushing that total up.

Did you spend some of the hours alone dreaming up plans for your wedding?

Yes! I spoke to Lucy most days and we often chatted about the wedding. Getting married to Lucy is something that I am so looking forward to, it was a great to have something so exciting and so positive to think about while I was journeying. Being with her is really grounding and reassuring as I transition back to life at home.

How was it to be away from Lucy for so much of the expedition? Was she able to meet you at various points along the way?

I started out on this journey as a soloist – unattached and not imagining that I would return home engaged. And to a woman, as well! I had always had relationships with guys before. We quickly fell in love during a forced break at home in the UK and decided to stay together as I disappeared off for another couple of years which later became two and a half years.

We talked most days, thanks to having an amazing satellite phone sponsor in Iridium. It was difficult but our time apart made us really value our time together (Lucy flew out to see me at certain points) and all that phone time made us really good listeners. The most magic part for me was when Lucy joined me for two months of cycling across North America last winter. My journeys ahead are with Lucy – “together” is the most important word for me now.


What was the reaction from the public to you coming out by proposing to Lucy?

It didn't really feel like a coming out to me – more just saying, “I'm in love with someone and this is the story of us being apart and how we are managing with that”. Everyone connects with a love story and all but one blog reader has been very supportive. This one chap asked to unsubscribe from my emailing list because he said he had “lost all interest now that it was a lesbian adventure”.

What would you say to any DIVA readers who want to follow in your footsteps (and wake)?

The most important thing is committing to the dream and going for it. Just get started. Make sure you research, plan and train if the expedition requires it – but many just involve the right attitude.

You've a book coming out in May (how on earth have you had time to write that?) Tell us about it!

I am writing the book, called Dare To Do, now and it has actually been a great focus for me after coming back home. I'm enjoying looking back through all the journals and maps and souvenirs I collected along the way to reconnect with all the experiences I have had over the last five years. But the book is not just about the tales of me getting from London to London, it is also about the emotional and mental journey I have been on, which for me has been just as epic. 

Find out more about Sarah on her website, sarahouten.com, and check out this video about the expedition: tinyurl.com/DIVASarahOuten.



**ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT**

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk

OVER A N D OUTEN



Made it! Sarah Outen completes her round the world trip by kayaking under London's Tower Bridge in November 2015

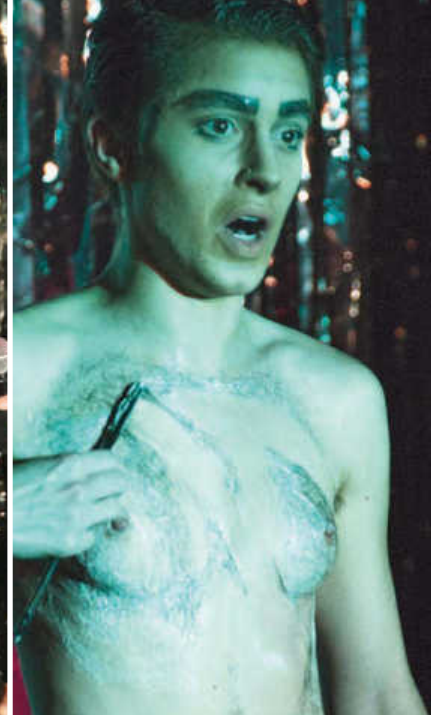
| SCENE | LONDON |



Butch as you like: queer women celebrate female masculinity at Brixton's Butch Please!

BUTCH, PLEASE!





IT'S BEEN A GOOD MONTH IN LONDON FOR ANDRO BABES WHO LIKE EXCLAMATION MARKS. DIVA WENT ALONG TO BUTCH, PLEASE! IN BRIXTON AND MAN UP! IN DALSTON TO FIND OUT MORE

Parties for butches and their babes are like buses. You wait a gajillion years and then two come along at once. First, there was Man Up! at The Glory. Four weeks of lip-syncing, striptease and bare-breasted stage-diving culminated in an electrifying finale that saw performance artist John Smith walk away with a novelty cheque for £500. Then there was Butch, Please! which was everything we could've dreamed of and more. Organised by Tabitha Benjamin, Nazmia Jamal and Caoimhe Mader, and held at Brixton's Veg Bar, it was sweaty, sexy and suave, and made us feel like we'd been transported back to the 90s when dyke bars were still a thing. Man Up! and Butch, Please! both return in the New Year. We'll let you know when... 📍

tinyurl.com/DIVAButchPlease
tinyurl.com/DIVAManUp

MAN UP!



Life's a drag: kings come out to play at Dalston's Man Up!



Love and pride: LGBT singletons hit the streets of Lisdoonvarna



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk

LOOKING FOR LOVE in Lisdoonvarna

I arrive at Dublin airport on a gorgeous autumn morning and am greeted by the kind of sunshine that makes you feel all warm inside. I tell my taxi driver I am heading to a place called Lisdoonvarna for the next few days – has he heard of it and how do I pronounce it? He laughs. Of course he's heard of it; it's the matchmaking festival in rural Ireland that's been going for centuries. And it's Lis-doan-varna, with a very Irish-sounding r.

I am going to the LGBT version of that famous festival; called The Outing, it's the only one of its kind and it's extra special this year because in May 2015 Ireland became the first country in the world to vote for marriage equality.

BELLA QVIST TRAVELS TO IRELAND FOR LGBT MATCHMAKING FESTIVAL THE OUTING AND FINDS A NATION BURSTING WITH PRIDE AFTER A HISTORIC EQUAL MARRIAGE VOTE

But first: a day in the capital. I check in at Morgan Hotel (themorgan.com) in Temple Bar, an ideal base for any Dublin venture, and head out.

Tonie Walsh, a prominent LGBT activist, founder of the Irish Queer Archive and an all-round lovely man, takes me on a guided tour of the city, pinpointing the many hardships faced by Ireland's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community throughout history. We start by the Oscar Wilde statue in the corner of leafy Merrion Square Park where

the city's first Pride celebrations took place in 1979. We stroll past the many Georgian houses, pass old LGBT community space the Hirschfeld Centre and the former Women's Centre, and we peek into the National Library of

Ireland where the Queer Archive is hosted. Ireland's LGBT people have a fascinating, and at times bloody, history; homosexuality was only decriminalised in 1993, and the excitement from the referendum result is still tangible. The longest-lasting impact of the campaign, says Tonie, will be the fact



that it sparked conversations about other issues, such as abortion. There is a move for change across society.

Later that night we go for cocktails at Liquor Rooms, a cool underground establishment where I have a drink called "Funny In Swedish." I don't get the joke but the drink goes down a treat. A lip-smacking dinner is served at Avenue (avenue.ie) before I head to Dublin's longest-standing gay bar The George (thegeorge.ie) where DJ Karen spins tracks four nights a week. Here I get talking with the local ladies who advise me that they sometimes also go out to Pantibar and Front Lounge.

The next day I find myself in a minibus travelling across the green island and before I know it I see rainbow flags everywhere. We've arrived in Lisdoonvarna in County Clare, an old spa town where the sulphur water is meant to have healing powers – though you wouldn't think it if you sniff it.

This quaint little town is home to 822 people, a few B&Bs, hotels and eateries, the hugely popular Burren Smokehouse (burrensmokehouse.ie), which this weekend is hosting the lovely Gaze LGBT film festival (gaze.ie), a matchmaking bar and the generously-decorated Hydro Hotel, where The Outing takes place.

Looking out over the windswept heaths surrounding the village, you wouldn't anticipate what goes on here but around 60,000 people come to the matchmaking weeks each year. The tradition goes back well over a century and a half and main matchmaker Willie Daly comes from a line of men with an eye for love. The 72-year-old has set up more than 3,000 marriages and he's rarely to be seen without his 150-year-old "lucky book", which he says contains the details of many happy matches. Touching the book is meant to bring you love (though I refrain; it looks like it could give you more than that) but there is more to the festival.

Today Willie's granddaughters do a lot of the organising and activities include blind dating, message boards and entertainment all weekend long. I particularly enjoy hilarious female trio the Nualas and drag artiste Panti Bliss AKA Rory O'Neill or the Queen of Ireland, who became a symbol for the Irish referendum – not to mention Horse Meat Disco and DJ Karen, who is back for another killer set. There isn't the faintest hint of dating apps

The trip was provided by Tourism Ireland. Bella flew Aer Lingus from Manchester to Dublin. The Outing 2016 will take place 7-9 October.

Digital magazine readers can see Bella's video from Ireland, including an interview with lovebirds Amy and Emily. The video will also be available on DIVA's YouTube channel.



The Hydro: where the flirting takes place

(though I think the poor signal would stop you from using them if you tried) and instead it's all down to old-fashioned flirting.

I chat to Amy and Christina who met here two years ago; they are getting married in February and they talk about the importance of the vote.

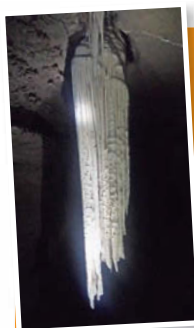
"Now I feel confident walking down my street knowing that I am accepted," says Christina. Amy nods and, tearing up, says she hopes it creates a ripple effect: "I would love for everyone to feel what we feel, knowing that we can get married."

It's a big deal – and so is The Outing. Christina points out that there isn't

a particular lesbian scene in Dublin, which makes the event so important, and I see what she means; there's certainly no lack of women here.

I don't know how much faith I have in Willie's matchmaking skills or his lucky book; he does at one point ask Amy and Christina if they are sisters, after all, but the atmosphere more than makes up for my misgivings. For two nights I party at the Hydro Hotel and for two nights I walk home through the misty heaths, giggling to myself at the fun that was had. Never had I thought you could have such a gay time in Lisdoonvarna, in every sense of the word. **D**

There's no hint of dating apps here, it's all down to old-fashioned flirting



SIDE TRIPS FROM LISDOONVARNA

I also visited the Doolin Cave (doolincave.ie), which with its free-hanging stalactite is thought to have inspired JRR Tolkien's tales. I went on a Father Ted tour (tedtours.com) complete with a singing nun and endless cups of tea at Parochial House (go on, go on, go on) and I saw the breathtakingly beautiful Cliffs of Moher (cliffsofmoher.ie) where I took the ultimate #nofilter picture.



Clockwise from right: Cliffs of Moher, Father Ted house and Doolin cave





When in Venice

Gay author Truman Capote likened Venice to “eating an entire box of chocolate liqueurs in one sitting”. Venice is nothing if not superlative but Capote himself was not shy of exaggeration. Dubbed the most romantic city in the world, it’s been the location of choice for many lesbian and gay honeymooners, though sadly it’s still not possible for LGB people to marry in Italy.

Don’t be put off; Venice’s romantic Gothic and renaissance architecture and art is second to none and has inspired artists and poets including Goethe and Rainer Maria Rilke. During the Renaissance, much to the horror of the Council of Venice, the city was considered an epicentre of licentiousness, where courtesans and prostitutes of all genders would line the streets in the red light districts. Today all that remains is the Ponte delle Tette (the Bridge of Breasts) in the Rialto area, where, as legend has it, women were encouraged to bare their breasts to prove they were not male prostitutes.

Breasts and other body parts, both male and female, can be viewed in various locations but these days they are mostly on the sculptures which can be found in the many galleries and museums, notably the Peggy Guggenheim, and on occasion in artworks at the Venice Biennale, which takes place in the verdant Giardini at the eastern-

JANE
CZYŻEWSKA
DISCOVERS
ROMANTIC
VENICE WITH
A LITTLE HELP
FROM DIVA
READERS

most tip of the city and the nearby former artillery-yard the Arsenale (labiennale.org).

STAY

Unless your preference is to live like a local in an apartment sourced through airbnb.co.uk, gay-friendly hostels can be found by searching the internet or asking DIVA readers for recommendations (@divamagazine).

We discovered Corte Campana (cortecampana.com), located in the second floor of a 480-year-old Venetian palazzo with a newly added elevator for wheelchair access. The family-run former home since 1872 hosts three large 1700s antique-style rooms that are away from the noise of the street and have a nice view of a private Venetian “corte”.

DIVA reader Jane recommended Ai Mori D’ Oriente (morihotel.com) in the quieter Cannaregio district and I found Il Lato Azzurro, a gay-owned and operated guesthouse on the vegetable-garden island of Sant’Erasmus, an ideal place to stay if you want a really quiet retreat (latoazzurro.it).

PLAY

Where to start with the riches on offer? Venice is a visual feast whatever time of year you visit. Whether it’s walking (and inevitably getting lost) through the narrow calle (streets) and alleyways, or along the canals and

bridges, staring at the Islamic, Byzantine and Gothic architecture, your stay in this car-less cluster of islands will be nothing if not romantic.

Whether you take in the modernist works of art at the Peggy Guggenheim gallery (guggenheim-venice.it) or the high camp of the Basilico da St Marco, the shops on the main street in the Cannaregio and Ghetto area, called Strada Nuova, or the only area of green space at the Giardini, you are in for a treat.

Never far from an osteria or a cantina serving cicchetti (Italian tapas), I had a romantic dinner at local’s favourite, Osteria La Bottega ai Promessi Sposi in Calle dell’Oca, Cannaregio. For cicchetti, Do Mori, in Sestiere San Polo 429, Calle dei Do Mori, near the tourist hotspot the Rialto Bridge, is thought to be the city’s oldest eatery, dating back to 1462. Myth has it that Casanova was a regular. Ask for the “francobollo” (postage stamp), a tiny sandwich with various fillings; it’s the house specialty. Vegetarian and vegan visitors will love La Zucca (lazucca.it) on Santa Croce, the cult restaurant that places vegetables at the heart of their menu. Described by Time Out as one of Venice’s first alternative trattoria, it’s still one of the best, not to mention best-value. Book in advance as this place is super-popular.

GAY

Some DIVA readers believe that the “gayest” time to visit Venice is during Carnevale (venice-carnival-italy.com) – which takes place in 2016 from 23 January to 9 February – when the evenings are filled with magical masked balls. Others say Venice is gay-friendly all year round on the down-low. Although there are no official lesbian hangouts, for gay men there’s the popular cruising area known as Alberoni Beach on the Lido.

Last year the mayor of Venice banned gay books from the city’s schools and vowed never to permit a Pride parade. Italy’s LGBT rights organisation ArciGay told Reuters news agency that he had confused his own “anti-gay beliefs with a city that is open and sophisticated.” Elton John spoke out against the mayor, Luigi Brugnaro, calling him “silly”: “Beautiful Venice is indeed sinking but not as fast as the boorish bigot Brugnaro,” tweeted the singer. 🇮🇹

WAY

Easyjet is one of the cheaper airlines and flies from London, Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Aberdeen and other locations. Check easyjet.co.uk for more details. Flights from London are just over two hours and fares start from around £150 return depending on season.

READER SNAP OF THE MONTH BUBBY'S BIRTHDAY BRUNCH



TO HAVE YOUR
TRAVEL SNAP
FEATURED, TWEET
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"Jen eating brunch in NYC is the happiest Jen I have ever seen," says Laura, who went on a birthday trip to the Big Apple together with her girlfriend (that's Jen, above). For a smile-inducing meal like this, check out Bubby's in Tribeca. The couple also enjoyed a trip on the Staten Island ferry (they advise you bring sun cream if going in spring or summer) and chilled-out hangs in Central Park. Thanks, Laura! (Instagram @Lauraekay)

TRAVEL TECH

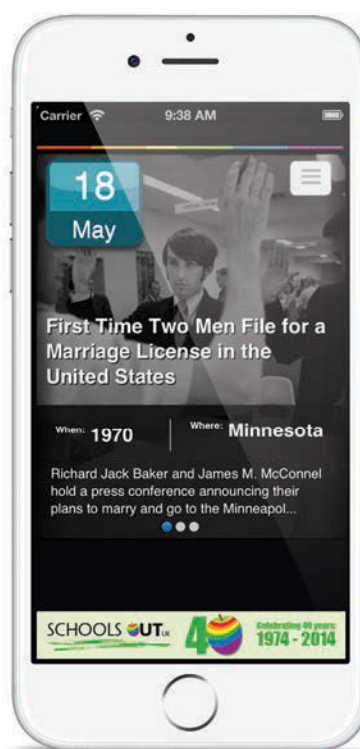
ROAM FREE

You know what it's like. You arrive in a new country and a text message appears: "Welcome to [insert country], calls cost..." Ringing, texting and using the internet abroad can be expensive but luckily (if we stay in the EU), as of June 2017, tourists in EU countries will pay the same mobile fees as they do at home. Until then, Chat-Sim might be a good alternative; whether Snapchat, Messenger or Whatsapp is your preferred way of letting Mum know you're ok, they offer unlimited online messages in 150 countries for €10/year.

chatsim.com



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QUEER TRAVEL

STAY INQUISTITIVE

Ever found yourself wondering about the LGBT history of a city that you're visiting? QUIST is a free app that sends precisely that information directly to the palm of your hand. With the help of an unprecedented geotagged map, QUIST lets you scan the world for different events, museums and locations related to queer history on any Apple, Android or Windows phone.

From a gay memorial in Alaska to the Gardens of Babur in Afghanistan; QUIST shows you the

LGBT places and people that are all too often forgotten in mainstream history. Another nice touch is that every time you open the app it brings up an event that changed the course of our lesbian, bisexual and transgender history on that particular day – a great reminder of the many steps taken before us. Oh, and founder Sarah Prager runs an LGBT travel YouTube series, check it out!

quistapp.com

ECO CORNER

DISCOVER WESTERN ICELAND

Lonely Planet has named Western Iceland, a two-hour drive from Reykjavik, the Top Two Region to Visit in 2016 and it's no wonder. Here you'll find glaciers, lava caves and the Hranfossar waterfalls, not to mention incredible wildlife – and Hotel Husafell is offering a sustainable way of enjoying it. Using 100% renewable energy produced on site, eco-friendly materials, local artistry and locally-grown food served in a restaurant with floor-to-ceiling windows, Husafell maximises your Icelandic experience. You can even watch the northern lights from outdoor hot tubs.

hotelhusafell.com



Hotel Husafell: stay here, see this...



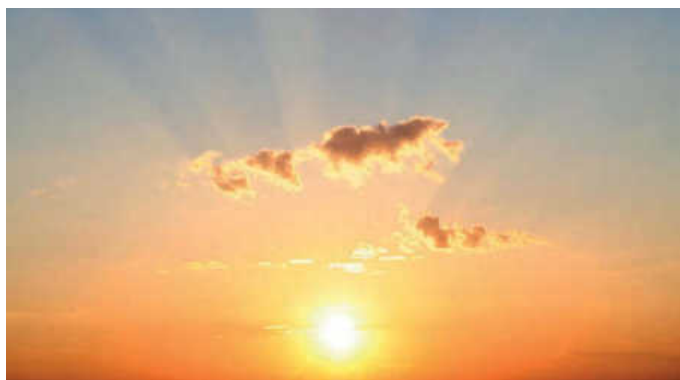
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CLASSIFIED FEATURE - ESCAPE TO THE STAR...

WORDS NICKY OSBORNE



Make tracks to East Sussex from bustling Brighton or London this winter, after a hectic week at work, and be charmed by the Star Inn at Alfriston, a timeless village at the foot of the South Downs. With Brighton only half an hour away, and direct frequent train services from nearby Berwick station to Brighton or London, the Star is the perfect getaway.

From the moment you enter the heavily-beamed bar you are travelling back in time. This Grade Two Listed inn was originally built to accommodate pilgrims on their travels between Battle and Chichester, and is loaded with character.

The Star Inn successfully combines history and modernity. The main bars have brick and wooden floors, chunky wooden tables and chairs, and not one – but three – beautiful fireplaces which are roaring in the winter months. Subtle lighting enhances the glow of the fire, creating a perfect ambience, and you can lose yourself for hours as you sample the excellent menu and wine list.

A simple, airy, yet elegant restaurant is available if you wish for more formal dining, perhaps to celebrate an anniversary or birthday, and The Library offers a quiet cosy room for reading the papers or sampling an after dinner tittle.



All 37 bedrooms have been completely refurbished and are funky and contemporary. Warm, sensuous colours create a cosy cocoon, all with stylish modern bathrooms. The feature bedrooms are a must-see; two are located in the oldest part of the building and transport you back in time. The Smugglers' Lair bedroom has a handmade "stock" bed, which whispers indulgence and romance!

For Christmas indulgence in fairytale surroundings, fantastic walkers' deals and foodie getaway packages, go to the website and snap up our freezingly fabulous offers!

And, for the super-organised amongst you, why not plan to escape down to the country for a Valentine's weekend with a difference? The village of Alfriston is the perfect antidote to busy and stressful city life, so surprise your loved one with something a little bit different!

Whatever the reason, grab your suitcase and head on down to the Star, and if all the quiet becomes too much, remember, Brighton is just around the corner...

For more information, visit www.thestaralfriston.co.uk

Telephone 01323 870 495

Or visit us on Facebook at The Star Inn, Alfriston.

FEEL THE LOVE

Happy New Year! Or – as we say in Wales – Blwyddyn Newydd Dda!

I'm Rhiannon, the new Sex/Life editor. I own That's The Spot, a sex toy consultancy service based in Cardiff.

The aim of That's The Spot is to put the pleasure back in the hands of women through creating safe and confidential spaces enabling women to talk openly about themselves and their bits, and to understand their bodies and learn how to pleasure themselves even better than they already do.

The buzzword of the month is, of course, "resolutions", often followed by "fit and healthy". I always praise the people who get to February with their resolutions intact – are you one of them?

If you find it difficult to keep fit regularly or to eat the right things, I have a New Year's resolution suggestion for you that will be very hard to break. It will only take five minutes and will give you more health benefits than you'll care to remember.

Get this – in five minutes, during this exercise, you will:

- Increase your heart rate
- Strengthen muscle tone
- Relieve stress
- Heal your headache and other body aches.

Then, as a result of making this exercise part of a regular routine, you'll:

- Be ready for a good night's sleep
- Feel happier! The body will have released endorphins, the neurotransmitters associated with happy feelings. Through doing it regularly



- you can even fight off depression
 - Build up a better immune system
 - Have a good glow to your skin
- And this is just the basics.

Have you guessed what I am talking about yet? Yes! It's masturbation!

A lot of us really have no idea quite how good masturbation is for our health. Most of you probably nodded when I said, "Be ready for a good night's sleep"; I think we are all happy to recognise and agree that orgasms are a big stress-reliever. But seriously, if you just put five to 10 minutes aside each day – be that in the morning or the evening or, bugger it, even in your lunchbreak, it will contribute towards some great health benefits.

Depending on what your style is, if you are a bit more vigorous, you will get more cardio done. When you are building towards that climax, the muscles in your legs, your bum and your stomach will get clenching – there's that toning I mentioned! Masturbation is also the most perfect way to exercise the muscle tone in your pelvic floor and genital areas.

As a result of all of this muscle-squeezing, and that release at the end, this is where the stress relief comes in. I remember when I was a kid and too awake to go to sleep, my mum would get me to tense up my feet then relax, then tense up my legs, then relax, then

RHIANNON KEMP-DAVIES HAS A DOZEN REALLY GOOD REASONS TO PLAY WITH YOURSELF

A lot of us really have no idea quite how good masturbation is for our health

move on up to my body until I got to my head – then after that, I had relaxed so much that I was totally ready for sleep; masturbation follows this same principle. It's just like yoga – that bit at the end of your sesh when you are cooling down. So this is why we can destress – that repetition of tensing and releasing. (I should add here that mum didn't include masturbation as part of the "get to sleep" routine!)

How does it help cure your aches and pains? Through releasing a chemical called oxytocin. Simple as that. Oxytocin is a natural pain reliever.

And the glow? All of this movement and blood racing through your body will naturally bring a lovely and natural blush to your skin and leave you glowing. Imagine what doing this every day will do for your skin, body and your mind – read over those points above again. It fights off depression, and really does get you in a good mood.

Now, did you know that despite masturbation being good for stress relief and sending you off to sleep, it is equally good for giving you more energy – so try giving it a go in the morning and see the results for yourself. You'll find yourself bounding out of bed, baby! And just see how good your mood is for the next few hours.

So you have your five- to 10-minute workout (or if you're pushed for time and you know exactly how you like it, your 60-second workout!) but it doesn't stop there. Check out the extra benefits of masturbation:

- It is completely STD free – the safest sex that you could ever have
- If you have restless leg syndrome, which is a neurological disorder that causes cramps, itching, tingling and pain in the leg, masturbation


has been officially endorsed by a lot of doctors as a way of alleviating these symptoms

- It relieves pre-menstrual tension and cramps during your period
- It builds your body's resistance to yeast infections.

And, naturally, it will help you explore your own body and discover new things about yourself. The more you know how you like to be pleased, the more you know what you're after when you are having sex with another. Being in tune with your body is incredibly important in every way, and this isn't any different. A side note to that is just because you know what you like, it doesn't mean that you can't keep your mind open and see where the journey takes you. It's a subtle difference but you'll understand it when you get there.

So – you really have no excuse, as a singleton or as part of a relationship. It isn't even an excuse – you have a dozen genuine reasons for doing more of this from now on!

My opinion on New Year's resolutions in general is never to think of "giving things up". As humans we do not like feeling loss, which is why giving stuff up doesn't last long. Take something up instead!

(A little side note – as I finished writing this article, my wife just asked if it would have been helpful for me to wank whilst writing about wanking. I am sure that you will be happy to hear that I didn't try this!) 

Read Rhiannon's top 10 tips for self-lovin' at tinyurl.com/DIVAtopen
What topics would you like Rhiannon to cover?
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**ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT**

More information on p9
divadigital.co.uk



Meet the Infiniti at Westfield

High rolling

WANT TO TAKE A SPIN IN A LUXURY CAR? HEAD TO LONDON'S WESTFIELD MALLS

"People need to fall in love with the car and for that to happen they need to touch it, ride it, get inside it"

With over 265 luxury, premium and high street brands, London's two Westfield shopping malls are now widely considered to be the most popular shopping destinations in the UK. What better place, then, to launch the new luxury car brand, Infiniti?

Infiniti Retail Group UK managing director Brendan Norman decided to take a chance on Westfield with a store on the edge of the Louis Vuitton-designed luxury village area of the mall to see whether he could leverage more sales in the mall than in the car streets at his other out-of-town dealerships around the UK. With up to 650,000 customers a week, it had to be worth a punt.

At the state-of-the-art shopping mall in Shepherd's Bush, Brendan has proven that his hunch paid off. Twelve months after setting up shop there, sales in London have increased dramatically. The secret? Brendan reckons it's a combination of novelty, a casual sales approach and experiencing the car first-hand. "People need to fall in love with the car and for that to happen they need to touch it, ride

it, get inside it," says Brendan, a genial and approachable chap, whose cousin, it turns out, is a lesbian.

There's a science behind the concept, which comes from Westfield's own Future Lab (yes, really) in San Francisco, which came up with a vertical integration concept. What that means in layman's terms is a car shop, with just one model on show at store level and then a couple of flights down, in the valet parking bay, a fleet of cars from the Infiniti range, available to test drive before you do your routine weekend or weekday shop. Add to that the high-class sales environment, which takes you from the store to fleet past luxury brands Louis Vuitton, DeBeers, Tiffany and a Champagne bar for an altogether more glamorous car-purchasing experience.

The benefits to the Infiniti brand don't stop there. Parking one of the luxury fleet in the shopping centre year round is the equivalent of just over £1 million in marketing spend.

With a change of car every month, those who've never heard of Infiniti can stroll up for a no-strings conversa-

tion with the friendly team – there's no hard sell – and the payoff is unrivalled visitor numbers and exposure. "We're bringing our cars to the shopper and inviting them to have a casual look and experience," says Brendan. But this incidental "find us rather than head for us" location means that the sales team have just four minutes to give you the low-down on the car, getting the salient points over to anyone who cares to listen, and dreams of owning a luxury car.

One in 10 shoppers at Westfield is likely to stroll over and take one of the Infiniti range for a spin. Some decide on the spot and others make an appointment. Brendan and his team made a splash earlier this year when they invited Infiniti Red Bull Formula 1 racing champ Daniel Ricciardo to the store, drawing swathes of fans and new customers. There must be quite a few people who show an interest in the cars and fancy a test drive but have no intention of buying, I suggest to Brendan. "That's fine with us; if people just want to test out the car and don't want to buy. It's part and parcel of getting the brand known by word of mouth."

And if you thought a luxury car was out of your league, you might be surprised to know that most customers buy on a PCH basis, which means they put a deposit of anywhere from £1-5K down and then pay from £265 before VAT per month for one to three years for the Q50 – the cheapest and most environmentally-friendly diesel model, which starts at just under £29,000.

From January, however, Infiniti launch their breakthrough car, the sporty-looking Q30, which starts from just under £20,000. Some customers simply buy the car for between one to three years and then trade it in for an upgrade. At the end of the payment term, Brendan and his team guarantee a final figure, which you can use as a deposit on another model or trade it in altogether. **D**

infiniti.co.uk operates from *westfield.com* in Stratford as well as Shepherd's Bush.

F1 Infiniti Red Bull driver Daniel Ricciardo test drives the Q50: tinyurl.com/DIVAininfinitiQ50

Men Overboard.

The Florida Keys
Key West

Close To Perfect - Far From Normal

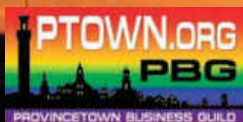
Actually, between the warm water, endless sunshine and incredible variety of things to eat, drink and do, it's quite easy for everyone to go a little overboard in Key West.

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MAYBE MORE

QUIET BUT NOT SHY

F, 40, GSOH, caring, well mannered with a big heart, enjoys vintage markets, music & travel. WLTm F for f/ship, maybe more. Mids. Box 995634

LOVING, LOYAL, FAITHFUL

Gay F, 42, 5'4", n/s, enjoys playing pool, tenpin bowling, bingo, nights in/out, day trips & breaks away.

Seeks sim F. Plymouth. Box 819303

CHILLED, EASY-GOING

F, 42, likes having a laugh, going out for meals, staying in, walking & the cinema. WLTm F for f/ship+. Swansea. Box 804572

SIMILAR FEMININE F WANTED

Bi F, 49, enjoys pubs, live bands, the sea & clubs. WLTm a bi F or lesbian, who is willing to travel. Hereford. Box 999068

SEE THE SEA WITH ME

F, 70, lives in a seaside resort, enjoys theatre, reading & politics. WLTm special F to relate to & spend time with. NW. Box 853717

KIND, CARING, SINCERE

F, 63, large build, n/s, loves music, cinema, walks, meals out, cosy nights in. WLTm F, sim age/ints, to spend life together. Kent Box 965503

MESSAGE ME!

F, 30, looking to meet F for fun, f/ship & messaging. Wilts. Box 214114

YOUNG, ATTRACTIVE

Sexy F, 28. WLTm nice, free, understanding F who is there for me 7 days a week. No jealous minded people. W Yorks. Box 145536

SLIM, BLACK-HAired

Brown-eyed F, 21, very close to her family. WLTm genuine, kind, nice, adventurous F. Mancs. Box 281994

CURL UP ON THE SETTEE

F, 45, loves children & animals, cosy nights in & sad films. WLTm a nice F with deep blue eyes, 42-49, for LTR. Shrews. Box 709798

COMPATIBLE FEM F WANTED

F, 59, likes days out, meals out & cosy nights in. WLTm feminine gay F, for r/ship, if compatible. Notts/ surrounds. Box 429489

OUTDOORS PERSON

F, 53, 5'2". WLTm F, similar area & age, who enjoys meals out, movies & theatre, for f/ship & to see what happens. S Ldn. Box 408924

FRIENDS FIRST

Honest, sincere F, 35. WLTm a like-minded F, for fun to begin with. Glasgow. Box 187660

A DECENT FRIEND

F, 39, honest & genuine. WLTm a mature F, who is ready to settle down. Glasgow. Box 349323

LOVE ME FOR ME

F, 48, loves animals, playing board games, classical & rock 'n' roll music, movies & country walks. WLTm similar F. Falkirk. Box 452797

PERFECT DAY WITH YOU

Stylish, fem black F, 43, looking for non-scene F companion. Essex. Box 150999

SINCERE, LOVING, THOUGHTFUL

F, 61, passionate about plants & gardens, enjoys walking, dogs/cats, cooking & quiet times. Seeks similar F for LTR. S Ldn. Box 379461

SLIM, WITTY

F, 49, blue eyes, attractive, 5'6", genuine, likes theatre, dinner, conversation & sports. WLTm F to laugh & click with. Essex. Box 157818

FRIENDSHIP FIRST

Gay F, 53, 5'5", medium build, hoping to meet new friends, hopefully that special F for a few laughs & socialising with. Mancs. Box 395914

THOUGHTS BECOME THINGS

Honest & caring F, 47, boyish, seeks feminine F. Come see the world with me. Clwyd. Box 196176

CHATTY, SINCERE

F, 53, enjoys socialising, walking, the pictures, theatre & meeting new people. WLTm F. Lancs. Box 943260

MEET, CHAT & HAVE FUN

Genuine, sincere F, 64. WLTm F, 60-65, for fun, outings & possibly more. Leeds. Box 443431

FLOWER IN SUMMER

F, 50, likes the garden. Seeks F, similar age. If you are interested, I would like to meet you. W Yorks. Box 662908

FUN & FLIRTIATION

F, 51, likes gardening, cinema & all the general things. WLTm F to flirt with and get to know a bit better. Mersey/e. Box 785411

VERY OUTGOING

F, 40s, slim, 5'6", red hair, blue eyes, WLTm F for fun times, maybe more. Swansea. Box 757493

RETIRED, PROFESSIONAL

Blonde, blue-eyed F, 60, 5'6", lots of interests & brilliant SOH, WLTm F as companion, friend or for r/ship. Cheshire. Box 245555

FRIENDLY, OUTGOING

F, 66, likes holidays, animals & meals out. Seeks nice F, 65-72, to meet up with & have a chat. Oldham. Box 438505

QUIET, SINCERE

F, 23, likes a few drinks out, seeks lovely F for fun times & a reason to be. Ayr. Box 357879

A GREAT NIGHT OUT

F, 31, enjoys travel, cinema, playing pool & bowling, looking for like-minded F for f/ship. Cardiff/Bridgend. Box 572639

FOOTSTEPS ON THE DANCEFLOOR

F, 57, 5'3", dark hair, likes car boots, reading, holidays & socialising. Seeks F for f/ship, r/ship. Mancs. Box 888408

SINCERE, HAPPY

F, 50s, likes gardens & travel. Seeks nice F for something intimate. Belfast. Box 372189

AFFECTIONATE, CARING

F, 51, seeks genuine, similar F for f/ship & maybe more. Belfast. Box 357756

LOVES HAVING A LAUGH

Gay F, 42, loves socialising, seeks F for fun, f/ship & hopefully r/ship. Mancs. Box 588840

SEEKING MS RIGHT

Single, bi F, 57, attractive & full figured. Seeks F, similar age, for fun times. Cotswolds. Box 283751

FRIENDLY, HONEST

F, 24, student, seeks F for f/ship & intimacy. Cardiff. Box 599721

BI-CURIOSUS BUXOM

F, 52, size 18, seeks bisexual, or curious F, 50-65, for f/ship & fun times. Hull. Box 417395

HONEST, FUN

F, 43, likes socialising & lots of laughter. Seeks F for great r/ship. Mancs. Box 741884

THROUGH THE MIST

Attractive F, 52, 5'5", hazel eyes, seeks F for f/ship & r/ship. Gloucs. Box 145226

BIG & BEAUTIFUL

F, 49, big heart, fun, seeks F to be her soul mate. B'ham. Box 400696

GENUINE, FUN-LOVING

F, 52, likes cinema, nights in & out. Seeks F for fun times & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 523480

LOVELY

F, 27, seeks similar F for f/ship, fun & more. Wrexham. Box 620424

HONEST, SENSUAL

F, 63, 5'8", medium build, seeks similar F for good r/ship. Ldn. Box 584603

SINCERE, GAY

F, 36, seeks gay F for f/ship, nights out, meals out, etc. Rhyl. Box 163669

LIFE, LOVE & HAPPINESS

Sincere, loving F, 56, seeks lovely, laid-back, feminine F to share life, love & happiness. Exeter. Box 623594

MUSIC LOVER

Fun, outgoing F, 41. Seeks F for nights in/out, socialising & cinema. Mancs. Box 291609

SLIM, FEMININE

Bi F, 48, seeks similar F for fun, f/ship & maybe more. Central Mancs. Box 301282

HONEST, EAGER

F, 43, seeks F for long-term, lasting r/ship. Darlington. Box 204027

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY

F, 53, slim build, WLTm F for f/ship, hopefully leading to LTR. W. Yorks. Box 411452

FRIENDLY, KIND

F, 52, 5'5", medium build, seeks similar F for mutual happiness & contentment. Mancs. Box 792911

GENUINE, FUN

F, 45, seeks F for socialising, laughter & r/ship. Mancs. Box 498200

EASY-GOING, NICE

F, 45, likes a laugh & socialising. Seeks F for fun & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 789818

100% GAY

F, 54, seeks solvent, gay F for good laughs & r/ship. Mancs. Box 870496

SENSUAL, HONEST

F, 52, medium build, seeks F for good times, maybe more. Soton. Box 499883

GENUINE, FRIENDLY

F, 75, non-drinker, seeks F companion, GSOH, with car, for cinema, good food & more. Devon. Box 828190

HONEST, BISEXUAL

F, 49, 5'4", large build, seeks nice lady for f/ship & maybe more. Powys. Box 807825

ENTIRELY HONEST

F, 55, 5'10", has a dog & cat, likes long walks, a bit disabled, seeks F for good r/ship. Darlington. Box 381150

TEETOTAL, HONEST

F, 72, n/s, likes holidays, socialising & conversation. Seeks loving, caring F for good r/ship. Lancs. Box 822209

PROFESS, LIFE-LOVING

F, 60s, likes beach walks, golf & photography. Seeks kind, affectionate lady, GSOH, for r/ship. Hants. Box 457627

FEMININE, YOUTHFUL

F, 51, GSOH, thoughtful, n/s, has ME, likes animals & mystery. Seeks understanding, caring F, 38-55, for laughs+. L'pool. Box 913989

FEMININE

F, 51, enjoys most things including cinema & meals. WLTm nice, genuine F & hopefully that someone special. Gloucs. Box 975380

SLIM, DARK-HAired

F, 42, GSOH, enjoys the coast, horror & comedy films, seeks non-butth F, 35-45, for good times. Tyne & Wear. Box 726173

QUITE BOYISH

F, 47, 5'6", likes to talk, not into the scene, into complimentary therapies & days out. WLTm F for f/ship, maybe more. Bradford. Box 909633

KIND, SENSITIVE

F, 46, likes meals out, cinema, shopping & the seaside. Seeks caring, honest, reliable F for f/ship & r/ship. Essex. Box 609985

NO STRINGS

CALL ME FOR CHATS

F, 21, into thongs & bras. WLTm a new girlfriend to see what underwear you like. NW. Box 765602

A DEEP CONVERSATION

Petite F, 34, size 36c, blonde hair. Would like to have fun on the phone with the right F. Call me. Gloucs. Box 912869

FUN FEMALE WANTED

F, 25, skinny, long blonde hair, green eyes. WLTm F to chat with & have fun with. SW Ldn. Box 121981

MUSIC TO MY EARS

F, 35, easy-going, loves life & likes music. WLTm F, local area, for sexy fun & f/ship. Merseyside Box 113991

ATTRACTIVE, BISEXUAL

F, 60s, has a partner, seeks similar, bisexual lady for adult fun & f/ship. N. Surrey/Middx. Box 812077

FEMALES RULE!

F, 22, seeks F for great times. B'ham. Box 556726

JUST FRIENDS

CHAT, COFFEE, LAUGHTER & F/SHIP

F, 54, (26 in head), seeks honest & kind friends, who like animals, music, reading, films & more. Kent/SE. Box 936002

CONVERSATION & LAUGHS

Sincere F, 44, into food, cinema & drinks. Looking to put a group together of like minded F's, 35-55, for f/ship. Sheffield. Box 210859

HONEST, FRIENDLY

F couple, 46, love music & meals out. Seeks like-minded F friends for nights out in Glasgow. Box 282737

DV 282737

Customer Services:

Dating FAQs & Advice Line

0906 200 1036

Calls cost £1.10/min plus network extras

Complaints & Service Provider

0330 333 6946

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NO PROBLEM

IF YOU'VE
GOT ISSUES,
WE CAN HELP

STRUGGLING TO KEEP GOING AFTER MY GIRLFRIEND'S DEATH

Dear Jane,
I'm writing to ask you how to deal with the loss of a partner. My girlfriend died in June, from cancer. It was a long-drawn-out, slow degeneration, which started about a year before, and I'm devastated. I've heard people say, "at least it wasn't sudden," as if a slow decline is any better. It was terrible for me and Kelly knowing that we were living out her last few months and then weeks, and although I did my best to be there for her until the end, it took it out of me and now I'm spent. The funeral came and went and then I really lost it; took time off work over summer and have only recently returned. I know I'm lucky that I had understanding bosses. I haven't been to therapy or anything because I want to do this on my own. But I guess in writing to you I'm kind of asking for some kind of guidance. I don't know if there are places I can go for support as a lesbian but I wonder sometimes if people don't get how painful it is if you're gay women and not married. Anyway, I hope you can help. There must be other women like me out there who've gone through something similar and maybe this letter will help them.
Pilar

Hi Pilar,
First of all, I want to say how sorry I am for your loss. Losing a loved one is one of the hardest things we will face in life. You say you want to do your grieving alone and yet you recognise you are reaching out for help. It's been proven that recognising emotions reduces their impact. For example, if you're sad, and you share that with someone else, the impact of that sadness is reduced. That's why talking about your grief, when you're good and ready, whether with a therapist, a friend or a family member, can be helpful in processing the sorrow that you feel.

I'm going to say something now that might be hard to read but it's likely that you won't "get over" the

loss of Kelly, you will learn to live with it. A wiser person than I said, "You will rebuild your life around the loss you have suffered and feel whole again but you will never be the same". How could you be? Your physical and emotional landscape has been changed forever. The view will always be different but you will remember that view, the emotions and experiences you shared with her, and you will relate to them differently.

Reflecting on the loss of her husband Fred, who died aged 45, the rock goddess Patti Smith said in an interview on Radio 4's Woman's Hour that she wrote the song Because The Night for him. In that song, there's a line "without you I could not live". Patti went on to say, "It's a love song but I had to face life without him. Of course I could live because I love life." A month later, Patti's younger brother died suddenly of a stroke. She said she felt quite broken, physically drained. Her way of living with her losses is to "keep [them] present every day" she explained, adding that "time doesn't heal all wounds, we just learn that when those wounds open again, to take a deep breath, because they will close for while and then they'll suddenly open".

I hope there's something in what she says that you feel you might be able to apply to you, too. In terms of places you can go for support, there are options. Depending on where you are based in the UK, you could Google counselling-directory.org.uk and put in the words lesbian and bereavement, if you'd like to find a lesbian counsellor with experience of working with bereavement issues. Alternatively, if you're London-based, try pacehealth.org.uk or londonfriend.org.uk who offer low-cost counselling for LGBT people. Also, if you're living in the Manchester area, the LGBT+ Foundation (lgbt.foundation) is a good resource too.

jane

READERS' REPLIES

I lost my partner 11 years ago after we had been together 17 years. I was living in the USA at the time and eventually decided to come back to the UK. I am a psychologist and thought I could do it myself. Although I had a wonderful family and friends I just felt so alone. There are people to talk to who have been there and can empathise.

Chris McMurray

I'm terribly sorry for your loss. I can't add much to what Chris wrote although I wonder if there might be some grief support in your local area. Your GP would be aware of what's available locally, and perhaps it could help if you're ready. Take care.

Traci Nobles



Raise money, not your glass. Have a Sober Start.

Want to kick start your year with a January detox? Keep that New Year's resolution to drink less in 2016? Join Antidote for a Sober Start!

Sign up and be sponsored to ditch the booze for a month and support Antidote at London Friend, the UK's only LGBT alcohol & drug charity.

#SoberStartLGBT

londonfriend.org.uk/soberstart



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THIS YEAR.
MORE THAN
21,000 WILL
ATTEMPT
SUICIDE.**

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Well, hello 2016! I wonder what you have in store for us...

I want it to be a robot that cleans, dusts, mops and feeds the cat, or Drone delivery from Amazon, or an affordable jetpack. It's not likely to be any of those things, although no one can refute that they get ever closer to reality. Coming back to earth, I have taken a cheeky look into the future just for you, and found some options which might not be over the average budget.

My intel comes from the CES Technology Show, which is happening in January (cesweb.org). It's a great place to eye up the latest trends and hottest tech and, heavens, are some of those products hot!

WHAT'S
YOUR CURRENT
GEEKY OBSESSION?
LET ME KNOW!
GEEK@DIVAMAG.
CO.UK

Rhoda Meek is an IT consultant and designer with a social media addiction, a crochet habit, a RaspberryPi and two left feet.

wodieskodie.com
[@wodieskodie](https://twitter.com/wodieskodie)



MORE WOW

THE CUBE

If you ever do presentations, I feel your pain. Projectors, cables and unhelpful computers make generally make it stressful. Worry no more. Featuring at CES is The Cube. It's a two-inch square projector with an image as wide as 120 inches. Mind blown. rif6.com



TECHNOLOGY

OUT OF THIS WORLD!

RESIDENT GEEK RHODA MEEK LOOKS INTO THE FUTURE



MORE AMAZE

FLIR ONE

Ever watched a programme on TV featuring a thermal camera and thought, wow, that's cool? Beat this – you can now get a thermal imaging camera for Android or iOS; the Flir One connects to the USB port on your phone. You can actually see temperature maps. Crazy! These are not cheap, but I reckon it would be money well spent if I could track down all the draughts in my house. Use responsibly, ladies! flir.eu

RICOH THETA S

This interestingly-named device is actually a handheld camera that captures 360 degree spherical images. Yes, 360 degrees. There is an app for smartphones and tablets that can be used to configure the camera settings and instantly view spherical photos and video via wirelessly connected devices. Again, not cheap, but quite frankly incredible, and unthinkable a few years ago. Find out more and check out the gallery at theta360.com/en.



MORE ENTERTAIN

CAST

Forget Amazon Fire, Chrome Cast, Apple TV, or even your trusty Sky+. Cast is a game changer. This Kickstarter, officially funded this month, is a whole new way of enjoying entertainment. In laywoman's terms, it is a smart hub which integrates a camera, a TV, and all devices in your home to let you watch TV shows and movies with friends. Nothing special? Here's the thing, your friends can be anywhere in the world. You read right. Anywhere. The Cast user experience is based on a revolutionary promise: live stream and mirror any content from your device onto the devices of your friends and family and watch together simultaneously, wherever they are in the world. Keep an eye on castbygenii.com, or search Kickstarter.



PS IT'S A NEW YEAR, BUT BEFORE YOU DO YOUR SPRING-CLEANING, SPARE A THOUGHT FOR YOUR ONLINE SECURITY. IT'S EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN DUSTING UNDER THE BED. Check out my guide on p71



December /
January

8.01

THE BUTCH IS BACK

RVT, London

An evening's service at the church of Female Masculinity – for those that want to indulge their masculinity and for those chicks that want to indulge it for them. You have a perfectly decent amount of time to plan your outfit. No excuses.

tinyurl.com/DIVA-fmasc

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B
Y

IT'S PARTY
SEASON BUT
IT'S NOT ALL
PARTIES, YOU
KNOW. WE'VE
GOT THEATRE,
A ZINE FEST,
ART AND
CINEMA TOO

11.12-8.01

SINDHI FILM FESTIVAL

University of Westminster, London
Bhavna Rajpal curates a festival dedicated to Sindhi film of India and Pakistan. It's all completely free!

facebook.com/sindhifilmfestival

29.12

DANCING QUEENS!

Hackney Attic, London

The indomitable scene-maker Ingo and drag king superstud Adam All are putting on ABBA: The Panto, and it sounds like the most fun ever.

woteverworld.com/event/abba-the-panto

31.12

NEW QUEERS EVE

The Wagner Hall, Brighton

Outsider-magnets Traumfrau are throwing a NYE party like no other. Neo drag/ beauty blogs/task-based performance/ male impersonators. Where do I sign up?

tinyurl.com/DIVA-NQE

31.12

MIDNIGHT KISS

93 Ft East, London

THE hot ticket this NYE. And c'mon, we all want to see in 2016 in the generous arms of queer party babes Pitch Slap! MINT and Aphrodyki. Oh, and half of lez London.

tinyurl.com/DIVAmidnightkiss

1.01

CABARET MARLBOROUGH

Marlborough Theatre, Brighton

Cuba's answer to Liza Minnelli hits Brighton shores for one night only! Margarita Pracatan is joined by Scottee, a casio keyboard, and one very infectious laugh.

tinyurl.com/DIVApracatan

WHAT'S
ON
WHERE
YOU
ARE?

Send your listings to
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For weekly listings,
visit divamag.co.uk

12.01

WANTING THE MOON

Marlborough Theatre, Brighton
Wanting The Moon is a new play, written and performed by the fabulous Rose Collis based on the life of Clemence Dane – eminent author, artist, playwright, journalist and Oscar-winning screenwriter.

marlboroughtheatre.org.uk/event/wanting-the-moon

18.01

DO DRAG!

RVT, London

Are you a performer or life-long exhibitionist who has a vague idea for a drag act but just needs a little TLC to whip it into stage-ready shape. Book yourself onto this course for aspiring drag stars! You shall be king!

tinyurl.com/DIVA-advdrag

21.01

QUEERS FOR WELLBEING!

RVT, London

Le Chien Noir is a cabaret fundraiser for mental health in the LGBT community featuring the awe inspiring talents of Ragina, Doug Segal, Lou Safire, Kiki Lovechild and loads more beautiful people.

tinyurl.com/DIVA-chiennoire

22.01

HOMOELECTRIC

Hidden, Manchester

Strangeways, here we come. Homoelectric is fresh from a cucumber-eyed winter hibernation. Hereby providing gay balm for the grey days.

inyurl.com/DIVA-homoelectric

29.01

A WEE DRAM OF SCOTCH

Beardmore Hotel and Conference Centre, Glasgow

Charity evening, celebrating Burns' love of women, featuring a bubbly reception, traditional Burns supper and entertainment from the wonderful Horse McDonald.

gaiawomen.com



16.01

ANGEL HAZE

The Laundry, London

Angel Haze eats haters for breakfast. They also have a penchant for picking girls out of the audience to dance with on stage. You say front, I say row. Front Row. Front Row.

angelhazemusic.com

31.01

YASSS ZINE

DIY Space for London, London

Weirdo Zine Fest is a new zine fair privileging radical and marginalised voices. It's happening at DIY space for London. Preference for tables will be given to women, queers, POC, trans, genderqueer, non-binary, disabled, working class and otherwise marginalised folks.

tinyurl.com/DIVA-wzf

UNTIL JUNE 2016

SCULPTING HERSTORY

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh

This revelatory exhibition Modern Scottish

Women: Painters and Sculptors covers the period from 1885-1965. Years in which an unprecedented number of Scottish women trained, practiced and excelled as artists.

nationalgalleries.org

UNTIL FEB 2016

ELISABETH FRINK

Nottingham Lakeside Arts, Nottingham

Elisabeth Frink was one of Britain's leading 20th-century sculptors, creating over 400 sculptures investigating themes such as the nature of humankind, the "horseness" of horses and the divine in mortal form.

lakesidearts.org.uk



UNTIL 24.01

WILD GIRL

The Hepworth, Wakefield

Wildgirl: Gertrude Hermes is a comprehensive and rigorous retrospective of one of the most puzzling and exceptional artists of the 20th century, whose work straddled sculpture, woodcuts and engraving.

hepworthwakefield.org

DIVA

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PHOTO TONY KELLY

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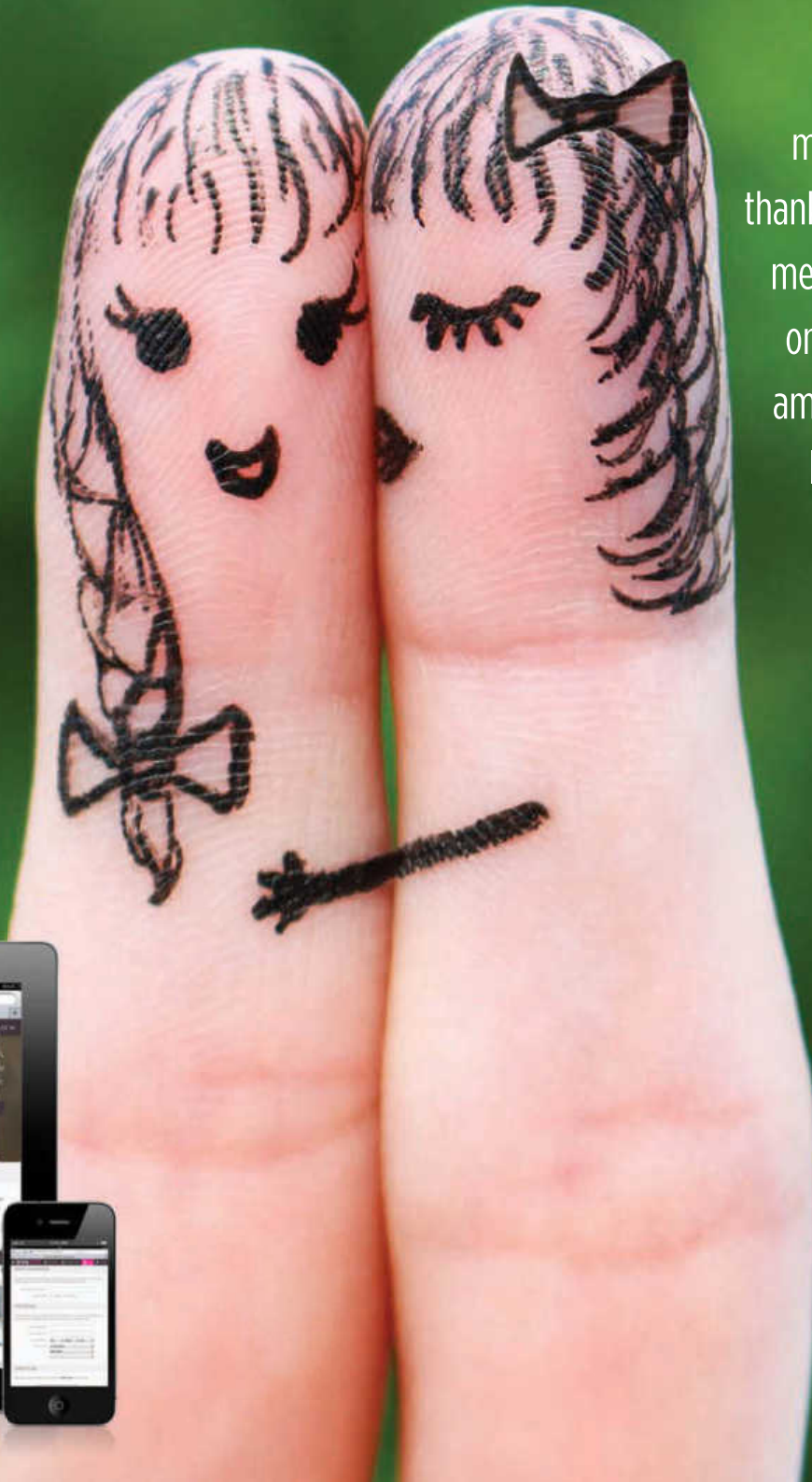
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